STREET SPIRIT

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JUSTICE NEWS & HOMELESS BLUES IN THE BAY AREA

The Merchants Who Buy and Sell Human Rights

Berkeley Council delays vote on anti-poor laws

by Carol Denney

The hearing on Berkeley's new anti-homeless ordinances was finally booted over to another day at 1:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 1, when even a City Council majority couldn't convince Mayor Tom Bates that it was perfectly okay to hold a public hearing in the middle of the night.

City Councilmember Linda Maio, now the sole sponsor of the Downtown Berkeley Association's (DBA) proposal for more anti-homeless laws, unveiled her latest unilateral changes to the proposal after midnight, at about 12:30 a.m. Her lengthy list of alterations was clearly an effort to deflect some of the criticism she's weathered since the introduction of the original proposal on March 17.

The public and the other members of the council had never seen them before. Any discussion of her brand-new changes to the proposed ordinance would have sent the hearing, which Maio steadfastly insisted she still wanted to have that night, well into 2:00 or 3:00 a.m. The bleary-eyed but dedicated public — about a hundred strong — was still waiting for a chance to speak out even at that late hour.

City Councilmember Max Anderson declared, "I have no intention of participating in this charade," calling the late-night sleight-of-hand a "backdoor rear-guard action designed to circumvent" the clear vote in 2012 against a proposed anti-sitting law. "How low can you get," Anderson observed, quickly noting the danger in noting a low bar before a council majority so willing to go even lower.

Councilmembers Kriss Worthington and Jesse Arreguin objected as well. A council chamber overflowing into the street had weathered four public hearings already that night: budget hearings about cutting already starved nonprofits; lively SEIU union contract issues; issues regarding a delay of the second phase of the Tillman Mason report on discrimination; a hearing on the loss of a local neighborhood view; as well as an appeal of the refusal of the Landmarks Preservation Commission to landmark the iconic Campanile Way (which the council blandly rejected); and the fresh contracts of all the PBIDs, property-based business improvement districts which garnered some inspired opposition in the wake of the viral video of the DBA

See **City Council Delays Vote** *page 14*

Mansour Id-Deen of the Berkeley NAACP speaks at the rally before the City Council hearing on the proposed anti-homeless laws. Carol Denney photo

A sign shows how little space the poor would be allowed for personal possessions.

Blockading the 'White Train of Death'

by Terry Messman

Dorothy Day, the co-founder of the Catholic Worker, has been a lifelong source of inspiration for James and Shelley Douglass, both in their nonviolent resistance to war and nuclear weapons, and also in their solidarity with poor and homeless people.

Day devoted her life to the works of mercy for the poorest of the poor, and often quoted Fyodor Dostoevsky on the high cost of living out the ideal of love in the real world. "As Dostoevsky said: 'Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared with love in dreams.'"

The same warning might be given to those who try to live out the ideal of nonviolence in action, since love and nonviolence are essentially one and the same. (One of Mohandas Gandhi's descriptions of nonviolent resistance is "love-force.")

Although it may be heartening to read about nonviolence in the lives of Martin Luther King, Gandhi and Dorothy Day, it is a more "harsh and dreadful" proposition to engage in actual resistance to a nuclear submarine capable of destroying hundreds of cities, and protected by the most powerful government in the world.

Instead of nonviolence in dreams, one faces nonviolence in handcuffs and jail cells, nonviolence sailing in the path of massive submarines, nonviolence on the tracks blockading "the train out of hell."

The White Train was described as the "train out of hell." Photo: Chris Guenzler

By the early 1980s, Jim and Shelley Douglass and the members of Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action had created a highly visible campaign of resistance to the Trident nuclear submarine based at Bangor Naval Base near Seattle.

Then, in December 1981, the Trident campaign took on an entirely new dimension when a reporter warned Jim Douglass that he had observed a train north of Seattle that looked like it was "carrying big-time weapons." The reporter added that the heavily armored, all-white train looked like "the train out of hell." It wouldn't be long before one newspaper would refer to it as the "Armageddon Express."

After being alerted by the reporter, Jim went outside the house where he and Shelly lived next to the railroad tracks leading into the Bangor base, and saw the White Train coming down the tracks. He noticed that several cars had turrets where Department of Energy (DOE) guards could put guns through slits to defend the train.

The White Train became a new focus for Ground Zero's resistance to nuclear weapons, as activists and train buffs discovered that the DOE utilized the train to ship nuclear weapons assembled at the Pantex plant in Amarillo, Texas, to the Bangor Naval Base and other military sites.

After mapping out the train routes, Ground Zero made connections with people in more than 250 towns along the hundreds of miles of railroad tracks traveled by the White Train. Residents in these towns began holding vigils on the tracks as the White Train roared by, and many were arrested on the tracks for blocking the trains and their deadly cargo.

White Night of Extinction

The White Train campaign became such a significant protest movement that it was featured in *People* magazine in May 1984. Not only was David Van Biema's report surprisingly meaningful and largely sympathetic to the anti-nuclear movement, the headline was stirring: "Radical Catholic Jim Douglass Fights a Grass-Roots War Against a Train Full of Nuclear Weapons."

For those who have never seen the gigantic Trident submarine, or witnessed the unsettling arrival of the White Train, Douglass gave as evocative a description of the nuclear train as I've ever heard.

"It was an awesome sight," he said. "You feel the reality of an inconceivable kind of destruction. Anybody who sees this train experiences the evil of nuclear arms, because it looks like what it is carrying — a white night."

The article in *People* captured the

See **Blockading the White Train** *page 8*

Berkeley Police Justify Attack on Black Lives Matter

More weapons, more surveillance, and even helicopters are requested in the police report. Police wish to continue militarizing police departments, as well as defending the violent response to the Black Lives Matter movement — as though legitimate protest in our society does not exist.

by Carol Denney

The most interesting thing about the police report on the protests held in Berkeley last December is what's not in it. There's no mention of the fact that it was a Black Lives Matter protest, part of the nationwide concern over disproportionate black arrests, incarcerations and shooting deaths. The Berkeley police apparently considered this context irrelevant. Black Lives Matter as a movement is not mentioned at all. It isn't in the glossary. It isn't in the appendix.

Everything about the "Response to Civil Unrest" report seems to fall like a shadow from that towering omission. Without the gravity of the national, even federal, recognition of systemic civil rights violations pervasive in law enforcement, housing, education and employment policies toward communities of color, people in the streets marching together to pressure for political change are viewed as nothing more than a riot on the move.

The demonstrators in December's Black Lives Matter marches had their dignity, their rights, and the deep history of the racism they were addressing set aside once the police saw evidence, emphasized in their report, that agitators might join the march as well. The report includes copies of fliers with phrases like "fight like hell" and images of vandalism which had no connection to Black Lives Matter as an organization.

The following passage is from "Response to Civil Unrest Police Report" by the Berkeley Police Post Incident Review Team about the protests in Berkeley on December 6 and 7, 2014.

"On 12/01/14, the Berkeley Police Department received information from various sources that a march was scheduled to take place on 12/6/14 in Berkeley. The march was advertised as a 'From Ferguson to Ayotzinapa March — March Against State Violence—Remember the Dead.' Organizers urged attendees to 'Fight like hell,' 'Bring masks' and reminded the public of previous mass uprisings that had taken place. Online flyers for the event showed a picture of a man sitting on an overturned police car. Oakland and San Francisco had just experienced 'Fuck the Police' (FTP) marches which resulted in mob violence, damage to businesses, looting, vandalism to vehicles, and attacks on officers."

Some will say that the police create this kind of agitation themselves. But longtime activists know that as possible as this may be — and police repression has been proven historically under COINTELPRO, an FBI program to infiltrate and discredit political movements — the Bay Area also has its own large basket of vandals and window-smashers who typically wear masks and hide behind a peaceful crowd, tactics which have confounded organizers of peaceful marchers for years.

Most people acknowledge that the handful of people who turn a peaceful march into a hail of broken glass are counterproductive in the extreme to any principled group, and costly to any community's ability to gather together, let alone stay in business.

But the group that smashes windows is also very small. The Berkeley police report acknowledges this, and yet made a decision to call in mutual aid forces and prepare for a battle royale before the march began, and apparently decided that as soon as things went south, everybody had to go home or take the consequences of baton strikes, CS gas, projectiles, and flash grenades. The Berkeley police report described why it called so many additional "police resources."

"The Department determined that because of the potential for unrest and likely high attendance, staffing resources above and beyond what BPD could field would be needed. BPD requested additional police resources from the Alameda County Office of Emergency Services. The County arranged for most mutual aid responders to arrive in Berkeley prior to the start of the event."

Ironically, this kind of preparation precludes the crowd management techniques which would have facilitated the march, as the report itself states:

"... crowd management techniques were understaffed in favor of preparing to utilize resources for expected unrest."

The demonstrators who marched to the police station the night of December 6 were met with a skirmish line of officers prepared for war with the weapons of war. According to videos from the Internet that police supplied to accompany their report, the officers seemed to have some agitators of their own gratuitously shoving and herding people in ways that inflamed tensions, as the report grudgingly acknowledges:

"The event turned to violence and looting once police blocked the roadway at MLK and Addison St...."

Even reporters with press badges were knocked around. CS gas, moreover, is banned in warfare by the Organization for Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) under the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993. There is no "non-lethal" weapon that hasn't caused increasing concern regarding its injury or morbidity statistics.

But the decision to arm the police in this way was made long before the march began, long before any violence or vandalism on the part of people in the street, as this report acknowledges.

The police report goes further, blaming their own lack of response to the few who committed acts of violence and vandalism on the larger, peaceful crowd:

"In addition to these violent elements, much larger contingents of protesters refused to disperse and physically resisted lawful orders, choosing instead to stand their ground and confront officers. These protesters, by their sheer numbers, prevented the police from addressing the most violent offenders. Through refusing to disperse, large groups of protesters, who may have considered themselves peaceful, protected, facilitated and enabled violent elements as they launched assaults on officers and non-violent community members within the crowd."

The report neglects entirely to acknowledge what hundreds of people experienced that night: The police gave dispersal orders to people trapped between skirmish lines with nowhere to go. The garbled, repeated announcements in an echoing urban setting full of news helicopters had the opposite of its intended effect as people came out of their homes and apartments and walked toward the noise to try to figure out what on earth was going on. The report states:

More than 23 dispersal orders were issued over 54 minutes using a loudspeaker beginning on Telegraph Ave. before officers took measures to disperse the crowd. The dispersal was read from a pre-prepared script... Rather than dispersing, the crowd size significantly increased at Telegraph Ave. and Durant Ave.

We as a community can all just stay home, of course, until we can convince window-breakers not to smash windows. We can abandon our own civil rights, of course, if we all choose to do so. But we would be well advised, if we intend to travel the long, respected trajectory toward justice, to keep on walking forward even if the Berkeley police decide that one angry flier telling people to "fight like hell" means we cannot.

The police and the City Council purportedly supervising them have a choice to make. More gadgets, more weapons, more surveillance, and even helicopters are requested by the "Post Incident Review Team" which clearly wishes to continue militarizing police departments, as well as defending their violent response to the Black Lives Matter movement in December — as though legitimate protest in our society does not exist, or is nothing more than a cover for civil unrest.

Our lives are not a video game. Our friends and neighbors, our children, students, theater-goers and reporters are not an invading force. We are the breath of life in a civil rights movement which we have the right to describe as a battle without being drenched in chemical weapons.

We will continue to patiently defend our right to gather and our treasured principles. Weapons, gadgets, surveillance, and helicopters are no substitute for the common sense and leadership which we hope someday we can count on from our city leaders.

Protests following the death of Eric Garner who died in New York City on July 17, 2014, after a police officer put him in a chokehold. The event stirred protests of police brutality all over the nation, including a march in Berkeley. Photo credit: www.ibtimes.co.uk

Youth on the Street in Light of the Supreme Court Ruling

The Supreme Court recognized dignity in all human beings on June 26. Let us hope that governments everywhere will someday address the issues of poverty in the same spirit.

Commentary by Carol Denney

On Friday, June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court announced that LGBT couples have the right to marry in all 50 states. Households all over the nation celebrated, stiffened, or wondered what it means to their community and to history.

In the Bay Area, the Pride celebrations honor an historical moment as the nation's acceptance of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender (LGBT) community members deepens and strengthens at what was once considered an impossible pace.

Across the nation in small communities without an organized LGBT presence, LGBT as well as questioning individuals in hostile workplaces and family settings enjoy a small but powerful moment of support which might help save their lives.

The prejudice against LGBT individuals in deeply conservative states can be life-threatening. It is no accident that approximately 40 percent of the homeless youth served by agencies identify as LGBT, according to a national report in 2012 by the Williams Institute, a think tank at the UCLA School of Law. And this number may be considered an undercount because of the continued existence in some regions of severe stigma attached to being gay, or even responding as such to a survey.

Some young people, when they find and embrace their sexuality, find themselves rejected by their families, religious connections, workplaces, and communities. A disproportionate number end up on the streets. Nearly 70 percent of young people say that physical and sexual abuse as a child, neglect, and other violent crimes happening in their homes played a role in having become homeless, according to Safe Horizon.

It is worth keeping this fact in mind when one hears the hostility toward poor, homeless, and nomadic travelers sometimes fashionable in political and business circles. As hostile and dangerous as the streets can be, they can look like a more sensible alternative, even to a child, than a life of abuse.

The Supreme Court's majority recognized dignity in all human beings and the deep connections between us all on June 26. Let us hope that governing bodies everywhere will someday address issues of poverty in the same spirit.

New Hope for Vehicle Dwellers in California

"The ACLU stands behind the effort to decriminalize homelessness, particularly as applied to the right to rest."
— Peter Gelblum, Chair of ACLU of Santa Cruz County

by Steve Pleich

On June 1, 2015, the California Assembly voted 56-15 to approve AB 718 which: *"Prohibits a city, county, or city and county from prohibiting or otherwise subjecting to civil or criminal penalties the act of sleeping or resting in a lawfully parked motor vehicle."*

The Homeless Persons Legal Assistance Project (HPLAP) and the Santa Cruz Homeless Persons Advocacy Project (SC HPAP) support this legislation and believe that this is an opportunity to revisit practical options for safe and secure overnight parking. The ACLU of California and the Western Regional Advocacy Project are supporting this bill along with many other advocacy groups who support basic human rights for people experiencing homelessness.

"The ACLU stands behind the effort to decriminalize homelessness, particularly as applied to the right to rest," said Peter Gelblum, Chair of the ACLU of Santa Cruz County.

Local ordinances make it illegal for a person to rest or sleep in their own private vehicle, even if otherwise lawfully parked on a public way within a local jurisdiction. The 2013 Homeless Census and Survey reported that people living in vehicles was one of the fastest growing segments of the homeless community. Advocates believe that the soon-to-be released 2015 census will reflect a continuation of that trend.

"Our research has shown a dramatic increase in the number of people whose primary residence is a motor home or RV," said Peter Connery, the vice president of Applied Survey Research.

Both the HPLAP and the SC HPAP believe that vehicle sleeping ordinances have no other legitimate purpose than to target people experiencing homelessness. In fact, punishing people who have no other form of shelter by ticketing, citing/arresting him or her, or impounding their vehicle has a disastrous effect on every person experiencing homelessness who rests in their vehicle.

Statistically, the number-one cause of homelessness is loss of employment. Often, the only way to keep the family unit together is to purchase a motor home or recreational vehicle to use as a primary residence. This situation is far more frequent than is commonly thought.

Vehicle sleepers — often women and children who do not feel safe in a shelter — are ineligible to stay in a family or women's shelter because of the gender and age combination of their children, who do not feel safe out on the street or in other unsheltered spaces.

Many people who rest in vehicles have some type of employment. For them, the vehicle is transportation to work as well as shelter. For all of these people, the vehicle is sometimes the last personal asset they own.

"Losing my job took everything but my independence. My RV gives me that at least," said one vehicle dweller who asked to remain anonymous.

Punishing a person with fines, impoundment or seizure of a vehicle that is shelter, transportation and the connection to employment, education or medical care only deepens poverty and prolongs homelessness.

Moreover, increasing the number of people without shelter reduces public safety and increases other types of local costs. So how can we provide this most basic of human rights and address the concerns of those who believe that public safety and order are imperiled by vehicle sleeping? Consider this if you will.

The Safe Spaces Parking Program has been developed in Santa Cruz and has been forwarded to both the City Council and the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors. The program is based upon the belief that safe shelter is one of the most pressing needs in our community.

According to the 2013 Homeless Census and Survey, more than 3,500 people in Santa Cruz County are without shelter of any kind every night. Of those, 28 percent reside in recreational vehicles, vans or automobiles.

It is estimated that more than 200 to 300 recreational vehicles, vans and automobiles serve as the primary home for families. Many families see this option as the only way to keep the family together in the absence of affordable housing. Most of these vehicles are forced by circumstances to park overnight on city or county streets in violation of local ordinance.

"My family has been able to stay together in our motor home," said Julie Ann, a longtime recreational vehicle dweller. "Without that, we would not have not been able to."

The Safe Spaces Parking Program calls for the city or county to designate a parcel of currently unused public property for the purpose of establishing an overnight parking program. Each program site would accommodate no less that 10 but no more than 15 recreational vehicles.

Potential sites would be located on city or county-owned property in commercial or industrial areas. Overnight parking would be from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. without exception. Registration for overnight stay would begin at 5:00 p.m. and end at 5:45 p.m. Staff and security personnel would then review the overnight roster and set the night's security procedures.

Under the proposal, volunteers or a nonprofit agency would manage the site. Garbage service and portable toilets would be provided at no cost to the city or county. Funding for the program would be obtained through private sources and administered by a recognized nonprofit agency. Volunteer staff would be on site at all times. The program would assume the cost of at least one private security officer to be on site one hour before registration until one hour after all overnight guests have exited the site.

Legislative action would be a tremendous help but we need to start providing safe spaces for vehicle dwellers now.

Safe overnight parking spaces are a pressing need for the ever-increasing number of vehicularly housed people experiencing homelessness. HPLAP and SC HPAP call upon everyone to lobby their State Senate representatives for the passage of AB 718 and to urge local elected officials to put realistic, practical options like the Safe Spaces Parking Program on the table.

Steve Pleich is an advocate for basic human rights for people experiencing homelessness. He is working with the Santa Cruz Safe Parking Project.

In Santa Cruz, a man and his dog are not homeless as long as their vehicle is not towed away or impounded. Many people make their home in an RV, van or car.

More than 3,500 people in Santa Cruz County are without shelter of any kind every night. Of those, 28 percent reside in recreational vehicles, vans or automobiles.

An Anthem for the Homeless

by Steve Pleich

It's a full-time job being homeless. It's a full-time job being poor. That's what those who say the homeless should just go out and get jobs fail to understand.

You already have a job, and that job is surviving. You have to get in line early for food and even earlier for a place to sleep. You carry everything you own on your back and when your clothes wear out, you spend all your time searching for replacements.

You only have so much energy to expend because you have only so much food to fuel your body. Most of the time, you're tired and you're sore and your clothes are damp.

But sometimes at night, you recall who you once were.

You were a kid and played with other kids. You had a mother and a father.

You wanted to be an engineer or a firefighter or an astronaut.

You were loved and loved in return.

You were a family.

And in your darkest imaginings, you could never have seen yourself come to this place.

You are homeless. You are poor.

Steve Pleich is the Director of the Santa Cruz Homeless Persons Advocacy Project

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The *Street Spirit* vendor program is managed by J.C. Orton. More than 150 homeless vendors sell *Street Spirit* in Berkeley and Oakland. Please buy *Street Spirit* only from badged vendors.

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Anti-Homeless Laws Move People Along — and Push Them Further into Poverty

by TJ Johnston

In the span of one month, police in San Francisco ordered Beti to move off the sidewalk at least 10 times. The 75-year-old retired nurse — who asked that his last name not be used — recalled his most recent displacement occurring at 5 a.m. at the hands of the authorities.

"This morning I had just fallen asleep," he said. "I set up my tent, got in, laid down, wrapped up and had fallen asleep until I heard a familiar tap. After tonight, (the police) said they would start citing again. It's like a terrorization game, a means of harassment, and it makes me feel helpless, looking for little spots."

Even with the numerous times Beti was forced to move along, his case is by no means isolated. Homeless people like him are constantly asked to move out of public spaces, according to a new report from the Coalition on Homelessness.

The majority of homeless and marginally housed people, the San Francisco-based homeless advocacy organization found, said that city workers — usually police officers — order them to leave, and that they received citations for nothing more than sitting, resting or sleeping outside. Furthermore, the enforcement of ordinances prohibiting such activities often leads to arrest, creating a vicious cycle of poverty and incarceration.

On June 18, the Coalition on Homelessness, publisher of the *Street Sheet*, released its findings in a new report, "Punishing the Poorest: How San Francisco's Policy of Criminalizing Poverty Perpetuates Homelessness."

A research team that the Coalition assembled, including currently and formerly homeless people, surveyed 351 homeless and marginally housed city residents. Additionally, peer researchers interviewed on video 43 people who described their experiences with law enforcement in detail.

These stories bolstered the data that was collected late last year. The research was supervised by Chris Herring and Dilara Yarbrough, doctoral candidates in the sociology department at the University of California, Berkeley. (*Disclosure:* The author of this story participated in both the data collection and peer interviewing.)

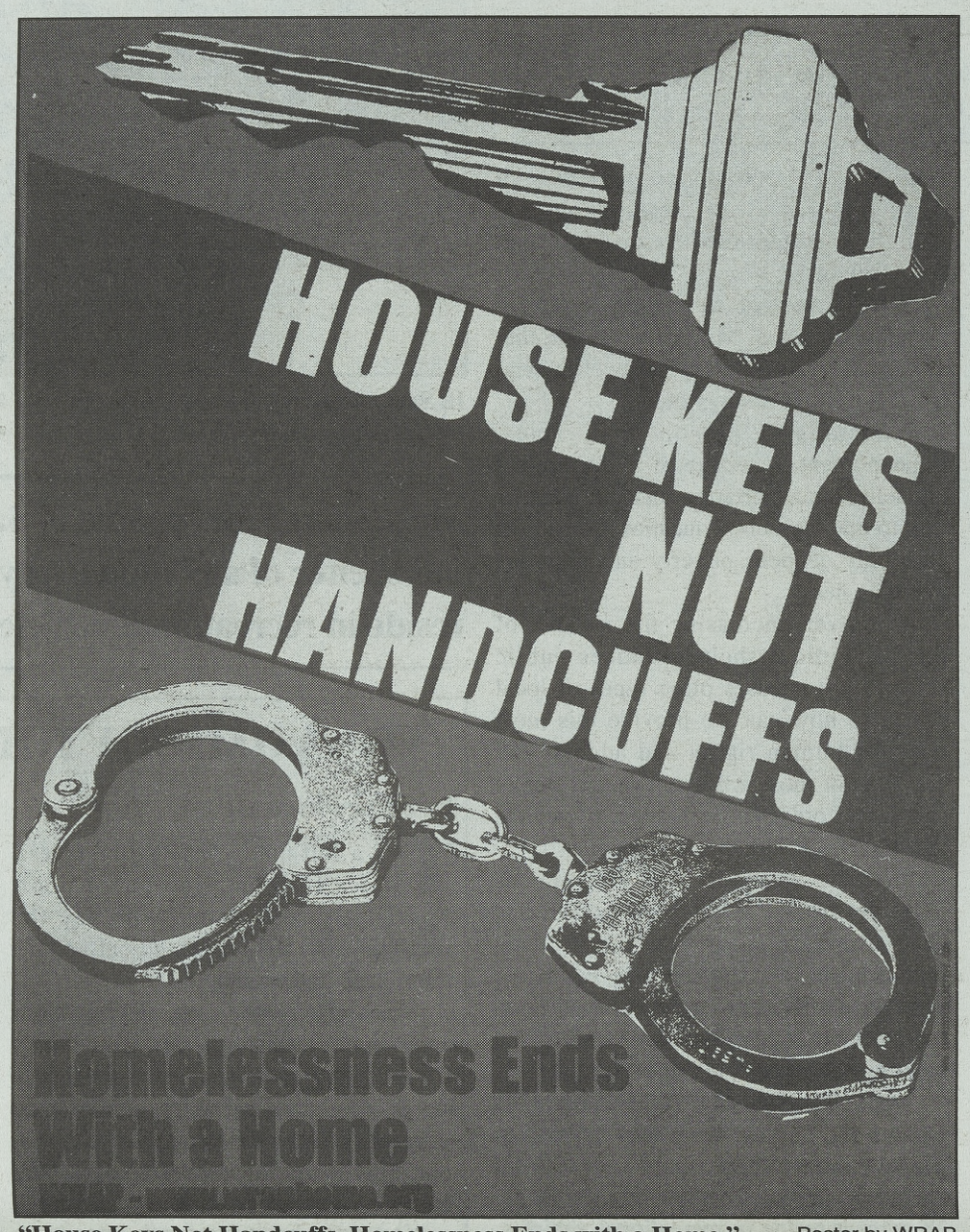
According to the study, 70 percent of homeless people said that authorities asked them to move out of a public outdoor space, and nearly as many were given tickets for activities in public space. Also, 64 percent said they complied by moving, usually down the street.

The Coalition on Homelessness recommended that San Francisco repeal laws used to target homeless people and stop ticketing them for offenses related to homelessness. The report also recommended that police prioritize serious crimes instead.

Assad Deiche, a 30-year-old African American man who is living at the recently opened Navigation Center, has been arrested about 15 times already. Like others interviewed for the study, he often is searched by police and sometimes is arrested for minor offenses.

"They basically searched me and told me to take off my clothes and put on their clothes (a jumpsuit), and they put me in a jail cell," he said. "That was for an open container, and that was for a couple of days that I remember."

Beneeta Ardion, a 57-year-old *Street Sheet* vendor, said she feels safest sleeping at the Powell Street BART station or on the trains. Last year, the Bay Area-wide transit agency drew fire for ordering its police officers to evict homeless people who sleep or lie down by the walls along the station. The Coalition on Homelessness led a sit-in protest against the policy. Often, Ardion is ordered to move along and relocate.



"House Keys Not Handcuffs. Homelessness Ends with a Home." Poster by WRAP

San Francisco has gained notoriety for its heavy reliance on police in responding to homelessness, and it takes the lead among California cities by enacting 23 city ordinances that restrict where people can sit, lie or rest outdoors.

"Every day, it's a different place," she said. "This morning, we're sleeping on the sidewalk and (The Department of Public Works) have to wash the sidewalk."

San Francisco has gained notoriety for its heavy reliance on police in responding to homelessness, and for its many laws directed against homeless people.

According to a recent study from the UC Berkeley Law School's Policy Advocacy Clinic, San Francisco takes the lead among California cities by enacting 23 municipal ordinances that restrict where people can sit, lie or rest outdoors.

The Coalition's study bears this out, with 69 percent of the study's respondents saying they have received citations in the past year. From October 2006 to March 2014, San Francisco police issued 51,757 tickets for so-called "quality of life" offenses, with more than 22,000 of those citations for sleeping, sitting or panhandling.

Most of the respondents in the Coalition's survey said they were unable to pay for their last citation. Failure to pay these fines results in arrest warrants — something to which Ardion can attest.

"It does leave me at risk," she said. "Every time they run my name, they tell me. What am I going to court for? I don't have any money. I don't want to go through 'community service.' Why am I being punished for getting tired?"

The majority of survey respondents — 59 percent — said that they had been incarcerated in the county jail or state prison, and most were already homeless before their last stint in custody. Others, such as Miles, who camps out at Fort Mason and requested his last name not be given, eventually lost their housing because of incarceration. The end of Miles' marriage set off a chain of events that resulted in homelessness.

"I was arguing with my wife, and it ended when my wife dialed 911," he said. The police, he added, were sure they would find illegal drugs on him. "They wanted $8,000 out of my wallet. They didn't let me call work to explain (what happened). It took two and a half or three days to explain to work why I was MIA."

The Coalition on Homelessness also found that when homeless people get arrested, it rarely results in connecting them with services upon release. Only 11 percent of arrestees said they were offered anything to alleviate their situation. Usually, it was just a pamphlet, a shelter bed or a one-way bus ticket out of the city. That offer of services is likely to be accompanied with a warning.

Miles recalled one cop's offer to "help" and how ineffective it was. "This one officer, he told me I'd get a hot meal and housed. I knew right away he didn't know what he was talking about," he said.

The officer drove him from the tony Nob Hill neighborhood to the much poorer Tenderloin and dropped him off at St. Anthony's dining room. "He said he was an 'emergency intervention specialist.' In the back of his car, he had the most fancy sniper rifle I've ever seen. Good at finding housing for homeless, he was not."

Beti said that mistreatment from police comes with the territory, especially when taking his identity as a gay, transgender man into account. "When I'm interacting with police, they automatically address the situation as 'man up, take care of your own problems,'" he said. "I've had many wonderful interactions with the police, but the bad ones outweigh the good."

What little services are offered to people exiting jail or prison is connected to the person's probation, said Janetta Johnson, program director of the Transgender Intersex Justice Project. Her advocacy organization provides correspondence with transgender people who are in custody.

"For some reason, I'm not seeing a lot of re-entry support (in San Francisco)," she said. "I'm seeing a lot of stuff over the Internet about supportive re-entry, but in terms of particular re-entry services, I'm not seeing it."

Assad Deiche said he was turned down for Supplemental Security Income three times because of repeated lockups. To him, jail "kind of slowed benefits down." He added, "It just delays what I'm trying to do what is good for me."

In the video interviews with peer researchers, some of the subjects address the onus placed on homeless people when they're under supervision of parole and probation officers once they leave custody. It's a common practice, they say, for officers to inquire about probation or parole status first thing off.

A transgender woman who chooses to be identified as Sindi said that was her experience. "It seems that's their first question they want to know," she said, "because if you answer 'yes,' they'll treat you differently than being homeless, like if you robbed a bank or something."

Beti also said that police frequently ask him about probation or parole. "That's the first thing they would ask," he said. "It's not 'what's your name?' or 'do you have ID?' It's 'are you on probation or on parole? Are you on paper?'"

Beti added that this line of questioning makes him feel horrible. "They're not interested in who I am as a person. They want to know if it was worth them doing any investigation to the circumstances they were there for."

Apparently, police are allowed to ask anyone with a history of being in the criminal justice system that question, according to Larry Roberts of the Public Defender's office.

"Under most circumstances, you are not obligated to answer any of his questions other than to state your true name," he said. "If you are on probation or parole and a condition of your probation and parole is that you disclose this to any law enforcement officer on demand or contact, failing to do so may be a violation of your probation or parole and cause to send you back to prison." He added that a police officer could easily search that information if given a name.

The study shows that African Americans and other people of color were approached by cops, forced to move, ticketed and searched more often than whites. It was also the consensus among the video interviewees that police target minorities and poor people, as opposed to whiter and wealthier people.

In the last year, studies from Seattle University, UC Berkeley and the National Coalition for the Homeless also noted a trend of criminalizing homeless people.

Tenants at Redwood Gardens Demand Respect

by Lydia Gans

Residents at Redwood Gardens, a U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) project for low-income seniors and people with disabilities, are experiencing increasing dissatisfaction with the project management company, Cooperative Services Inc (CSI).

Redwood Gardens is a complex of 169 apartments, gardens and meeting spaces located at 2951 Derby Street in Berkeley. It was originally established as a co-op but that is no longer its status. At present, management makes decisions and takes action without seeking input from residents.

Complaints, questions and requests often are simply ignored. There have been long delays in correcting hazardous conditions and ADA violations, as well as security threats and disregard for the health and welfare of those who are particularly fragile.

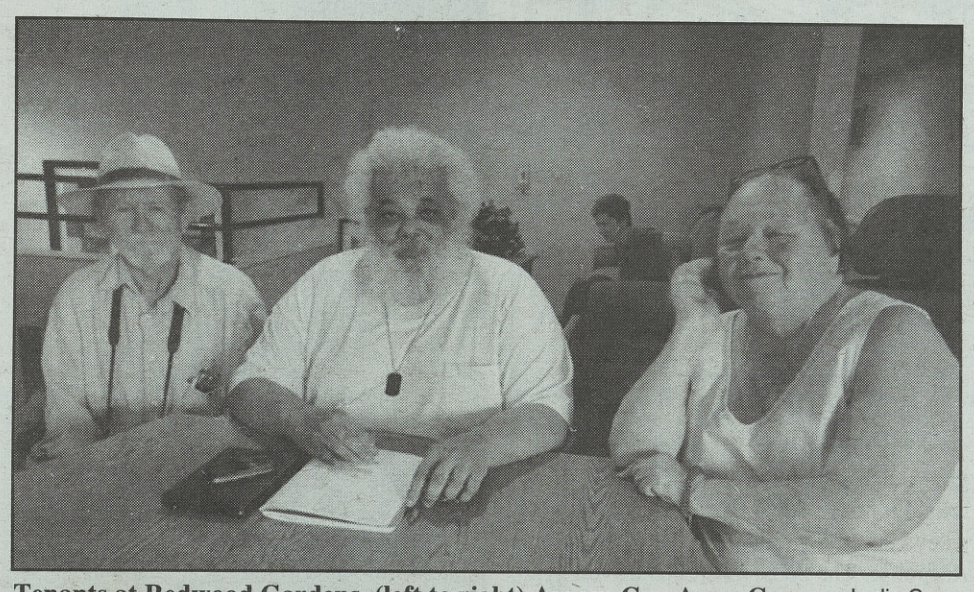
Last year, Redwood Gardens received some publicity when management announced plans for major renovations and residents protested that they were given virtually no input on either the plans or the renovation process. Many residents expressed intense frustration with the disruption in their lives as it was happening.

They appealed for help from the manager, the workers and anybody they could reach connected with the building. Eleanor Walden and Gary Hicks, co-chairs of the Residents' Council, have been reaching out for help from community organizations, legal assistance for seniors, disability rights, housing action, as well as city departments, but virtually nothing has been available to them.

Walden explains: "We're in an interesting position. The land that we're on is owned by the University of California, the buildings are owned by CSI, we are in the city of Berkeley and nobody wants to take responsibility for what goes on here."

The residents of Redwood Gardens decided that they would have to reach out nationally. Years ago, Gary Hicks had worked with the National Association of HUD Tenants (NAHT) in Boston. He made a strong case for joining the organization.

The NAHT website states: "NAHT works with organizers across the country to unite tenants in project-based Section 8 housing. Through outreach and training, tenants are mobilized to fight to preserve their housing and their rights. We are a diverse network of over 300 building-level tenant unions, area and state-wide coalitions, tenant organizing projects, legal service agencies, and other housing-related tenant organizations."



Tenants at Redwood Gardens, (left to right) Avram Gur Arye, Gary Hicks and Eleanor Walden, are working to uphold the rights of residents. Lydia Gans photo

"I heard the word 'respect' used so many times at this conference. I still get goosebumps because that has been one of the things that hurt me most that happened (at Redwood Gardens). We were treated with distance, lack of respect."

— Eleanor Walden, tenant activist at Redwood Gardens in Berkeley

So last month, from June 21 to 23, Eleanor Walden and another tenant, Avram Gur Arye, attended the NAHT annual conference in Washington, D. C. The first two days were devoted to tenant-run workshops, and the third, Lobby Day, was spent on meetings with HUD officials and members of Congress.

Walden describes herself as "an old activist." The way to get things done, she declares, is by "nudging." She lays out her approach to the building management. "OK, we have a complaint, a legitimate complaint. We're not just going to send it to the manager, or to the corporation, or to this one or that one. We're going to send it to everyone. We're going to get HUD involved, we're going to be a bug on their behind until they give us some attention."

Avram Gur Arye is an architect. His work has been in housing and he understands peoples' needs for comfort and security. He is thoroughly familiar with the relevant regulations, departments and commissions, where and who to go to in the city for information and assistance. This is particularly valuable in the situation that Redwood Gardens tenants are facing.

But he only became an activist in the last six years after he came to Berkeley. "Berkeley did this to me," he says. "I was an ordinary architect, working in housing, doing good work in San Francisco and Oakland, but I was apolitical."

Asked why he chose to be a delegate to the convention, Arye says, "The main thing motivating me is making sure that, whether I'm going to be in HUD housing the rest of my life or not, I want to make certain that the safety net of HUD housing is kept and that it stays a government agency, not a privatized agency."

Arye returned from the convention full of enthusiasm. "Tools. Tools and connections," he explains, talking about the many workshops and informal discussions among the participants and meetings with government officials. He described a process called "Eyes and Ears" involving people getting together and telling their stories to representatives of HUD.

It was the people he connected with that he was most excited about. "There are connections that we got on every subject that came up in the workshops, the luncheons and accountability sessions. I'm an architect, became an activist in Berkeley, and now can share information (with people) all over the country."

Arye said he found "someone in a small town in Texas (who) was interested in how I had gotten the building officials to do what HUD didn't do, and faster."

Eleanor Walden echoed his enthusiasm as she described the Eyes and Ears meeting. "I was in a room with more talent, intelligence, experience, and knowledge than I have seen since 1964 in the civil rights movement," she says. "These mostly Black, largely women, are all tenant organizers of great skill and ability and they knew what they were talking about. They were able to recount it in story-telling fashion."

She says, "People use the word 'complaints' when they talk about tenants. There is no complaining. This was the facts and the experience and this is what has happened to me and to the people in the larger region which I'm from."

On the subject of words and the attitudes they reflect, Walden says, "I heard the word 'respect' used so many times at this conference I still get goosebumps because that has been one of the things that hurt me most that happened in this building (at Redwood Gardens). We were treated with distance, lack of respect.

"I thought it was just me. The fact that we are old or disabled or marginalized does not mean that we don't have experience, education, dedication, ability — all of the things that they didn't give us credit for. That came up over and over and over."

Walden brings back from the conference an "amazing amount of information that we didn't know was going on nationwide. For example, buildings like ours are being renovated to the tune, in this particular case, of 3 1/2 million dollars and then they're being sold off. And there are many ways in which they're being sold off — by being upgraded to university dorms, upgraded to gentrification or they're being, in some cases, sold to the tenants.

"People here have asked, 'what are their intentions?' That's what I've been trying to find out. Now I see that we were not off the mark. There is a pattern of selling off these buildings."

Walden and Arye say this was just a beginning. They will reach out to other Section 8 housing projects in the area and expand their contacts with activists all over the country.

Removal of Bus Shelter Harms East Oakland Residents

by Lynda Carson

In early June, the much-needed bus shelter and passenger bench at the corner of East 18th Street and 3rd Avenue in Oakland was removed without advance notice to the passengers using the bus stop. Locals were shocked to suddenly find the bus shelter and bench removed.

Many people at the bus stop believe that the removal of the bus shelter and bench was carried out as a collective punishment against the community because homeless people sometimes use the bus shelter to store their possessions.

The bus shelter and bench sat directly in front of a busy Lucky grocery store near Walgreens and has been a greatly needed fixture over the past years because it protects bus passengers from the sun, rain and the often chilly breezes that blow across nearby Lake Merritt.

Many elderly and disabled persons in the community depend on the bus shelter and bench on a daily basis as a place to rest and keep their groceries safely out of the sun while waiting for the next bus.

At least three different buses use the bus stop to collect passengers heading to different destinations, including the #18 bus used by wealthier people heading up into the hills, and the very overcrowded #14 bus that heads deeper into East Oakland. Many bus riders claim the #14 is the worst bus line operating in Oakland.

Locals disparagingly call the #14 line the "ghetto bus" and claim that it is late most of the time, and is generally overcrowded because there are not enough buses operating on the line to support all the poor people who depend on the bus to reach their destination on a daily basis.

In comparison, at times during rush hour, the less crowded #18 bus going to wealthier areas of Oakland appears to be running twice as often at East 18th Street and 3rd Avenue compared to the overcrowded #14 bus used by poor people.

During the past few weeks, according to bus passengers, on at least one occasion the #14 bus was running late by an hour and a half. It was so crammed with people after a few busy stops near 11th Street and Broadway, that bus passengers were shouting and screaming that it was inhumane treatment, and difficult to breathe.

Passengers stated that it became nearly impossible for people to get on or off the bus, as more and more people tried to force their way onto the bus at each stop. According to sources, passengers were screaming to get off the bus and the bus driver kept screaming back at the passengers during that perilous ride.

Cheryl Saunders said, "I have often noticed that the buses going to wealthier areas of Oakland tend to run on time, run more often and are much less crowded than the buses used by poorer people heading into East Oakland."

Ben Fulcher, Sr. stated, "This is collective punishment against the poor, elderly and disabled who need the bus shelters and other services."

In response to my request for an interview, Clarence Johnson of media relations for AC Transit repeatedly said that AC Transit does not own the bus shelters and benches located at bus stops in Oakland.

"The bus shelters and benches are all owned by Clear Channel Outdoor, and I do not know why the bus shelter and bench was removed," Johnson said.

"However, shelters and benches historically have been removed when they are being abused. Sometimes churches will call us to ask us to remove a bus shelter when drug dealers are using the shelters for illegal purposes. When people call to complain that a bus shelter is being abused, generally the bus shelter and benches are removed. You will have to contact Clear Channel Outdoor for more information."

When I pointed out that removing the much-needed bus shelter and bench because of a few bad actors is inhumane and amounts to collective punishment against the whole community, Johnson continued to defend the actions of Clear Channel Outdoor as being an acceptable practice despite the hardship their actions may have on all the elderly and disabled bus passengers using the bus shelter.

I called Clear Channel Outdoor to speak to someone about the sudden removal of the bus shelter and bench, and was connected to Selena Reynolds, who did not respond to my call. Reynolds handles real estate, including furniture and bus benches at bus stops in Oakland, according to the receptionist.

See **Removal of Bus Shelter** *page 14*

Y-M-C-A: How Do You Spell Anti-Homeless Hypocrisy?

A Column on Human Rights

by Carol Denney

On March 17, two key leaders of Berkeley's YMCA attended the City Council meeting to address the council regarding Berkeley's "Community Commercial Sidewalks and Public Spaces" proposal, a new raft of anti-homeless laws including a suggested law which would make it a crime to use a blanket or bedding between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.

YMCA Executive Director Hae Won Rhow and Albert Chan, senior membership director of Berkeley's YMCA, attended the council meeting. Chan spoke out for the proposed anti-homeless laws.

Nobody knows yet what form the final legislation will take. Berkeley City Manager Christine Daniel just quit, and the reworked ordinances might not pass the council at all, although they seem to have the votes. But the Berkeley City Council is entitled to consider the YMCA's pointed comments that evening as being in favor of new anti-homeless laws.

Chan identified himself as a YMCA employee, and in mentioning the 9,000 *households served by the YMCA, he blamed the presence of homeless people* as the reason that YMCA members are "frightful" (sic) of coming downtown.

"I want to talk to you about safety," he stated, citing a violent incident which had occurred on the Post Office steps.

There is no need to criminalize already criminal behavior, so this example, like many of the examples offered by the handful in favor of the anti-homeless proposal, was an odd choice to use to promote more criminalization targeting homeless people and their belongings.

The anti-homeless law supporters that night who mentioned smoking, or violence, or threatening behavior need only call the police and report criminal behavior when they observe it.

But Mr. Chan is like a lot of business people in downtown Berkeley. It is easier to blame homeless and poor people than actually work in cooperative ways to reduce threatening and dangerous behavior — even behavior sometimes committed by YMCA staff and clientele.

"Phillip," a lifeguard at the YMCA, takes a "vape" break right by the front entrance in the accompanying photo. He knew nothing of the smoking regulation in the commercial district or the recent law which was altered to include electronic cigarettes, nor had the YMCA supervisory staff informed him about it.

At least two residents at the YMCA's hotel also were told by management to smoke right by their exit door, despite this being a violation of Berkeley's law and a guaranteed way to expose all the YMCA members coming and going to classes or working out.

The two YMCA staff members behind the counter the day this photograph was taken also knew nothing about Berkeley's commercial districts law, insisting that smoking a few feet from a doorway was still the operative regulation.

And they are not alone. The security guard at the next door Social Security office tells clients to smoke right outside on the sidewalk, as does the crew at nearby First Response. The AC Transit bus drivers typically take their smoke break in front of the Shattuck Hotel by their buses.

The City of Berkeley has abandoned the once-vigorous efforts to ensure signage and promote education about the current regulations, leaving in place popular mythology that poor and homeless people are the bulk of the smoking violators downtown, which is easy to disprove with a short stroll through the streets. The city's current smoking regulations are a moving target which almost no one, including the police, can accurately describe, regulations which are enforced disproportionately against the poor.

Let's be clear. Chan, the YMCA spokesperson, could have addressed the general safety issue in the downtown during the general public comment period. But he and YMCA Executive Director Hae Won Rhow made a decision to attend and to speak directly to Item 19 on the March 17 agenda: the "Community Commercial Sidewalks and Public Spaces."

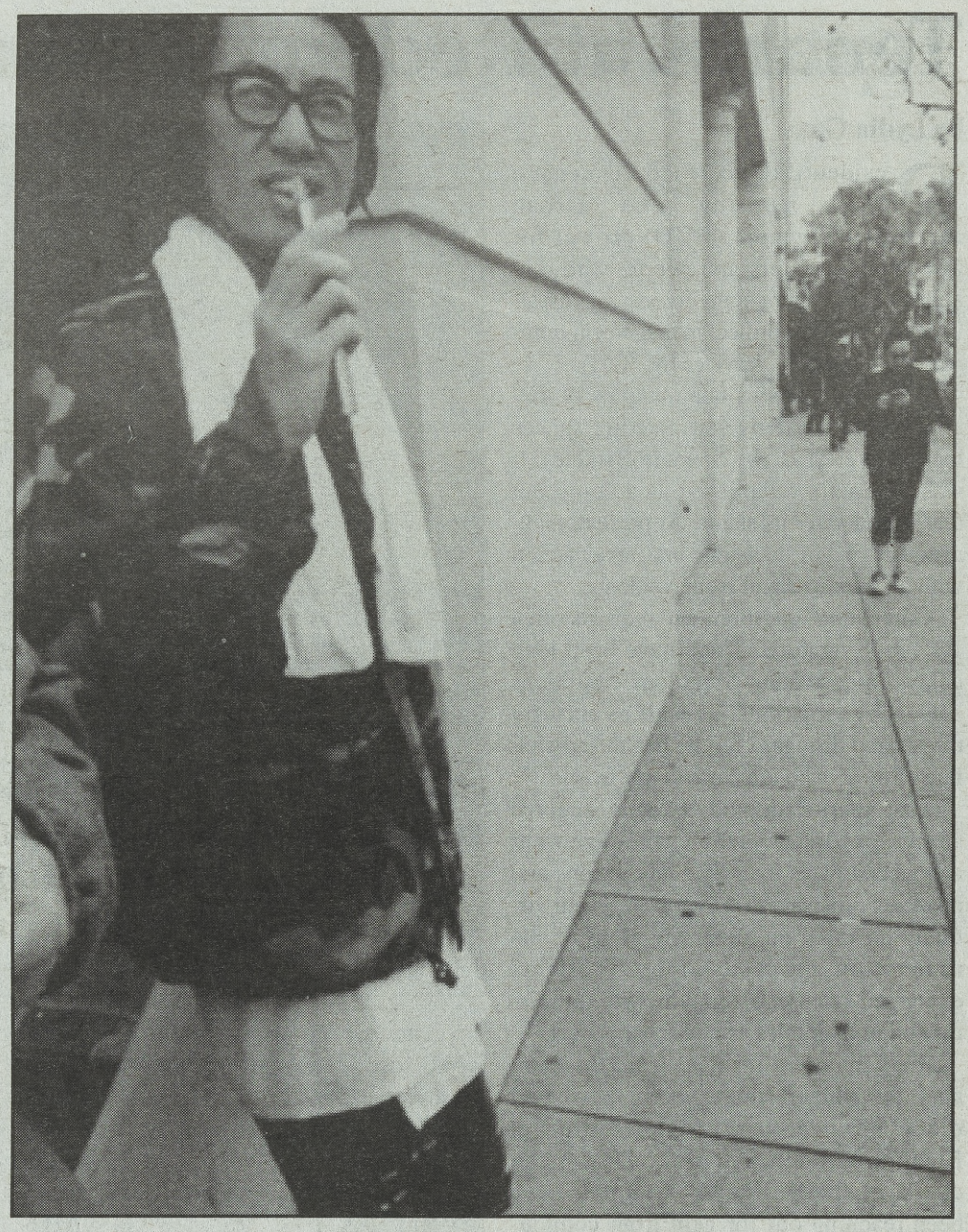
This proposal is opposed by the ACLU *and more than 60 religious leaders and local civil rights organizations* as likely to be used in a discriminatory fashion.

Chan could have clarified that he was not speaking as a YMCA representative, but he stated his job title quite clearly. The Berkeley City Council was treated to the very strong impression that not only the YMCA leadership, but the YMCA membership as well, supports new anti-homeless laws which, in fact, do nothing to improve public safety.

Executive Director Hae Won Rhow responded to an email about the YMCA's show of support for the proposed legislation: "I'm sorry to hear that our statements about the increase of concerns around harassment and sanitation was seen as anti-homeless. It's quite the opposite. We believe that we need to address issues of behavior and health with all that don't follow them — we see it with affluent teenagers from Berkeley HS to even our own members. That is what we wanted to share and that we need help with communication and with appropriate consequences. We don't label anyone as a problem, but we only wanted to state that we are seeing an increase in the issues."

But Chan didn't mention any group except the homeless in his testimony to the City Council on March 17. He didn't mention teenagers, or issues with their own membership. "Appropriate consequences" are an inappropriate way to describe criminalizing the attributes of homelessness in a town seemingly dedicated to having less low-income housing than the community needs. And "sanitation," a respectable issue to be sure, is in no way addressed by criminalizing panhandling or blankets and bedding.

Criminalization of homelessness is costly, ineffective and inhumane. A majority of Berkeley voters know this, and voted down the City Council's most recent effort to add to an already embarrassingly high pile of Berkeley anti-homeless laws, when they defeated an absurd anti-sitting law in 2012.



A YMCA lifeguard takes a "vape break" right by the Berkeley YMCA's front entrance in violation of the city's anti-smoking laws. Carol Denney photo

The Berkeley City Council was treated to the very strong impression that not only the YMCA leadership, but the YMCA membership as well, supports new anti-homeless laws which, in fact, do nothing to improve public safety.

The Peace and Justice Commission, the ACLU, and Berkeley's Homeless Task Force oppose the new laws, and odds are strong that a majority of YMCA members can be counted on to care deeply about resolving homelessness, not making homeless and poor people more miserable and burdened than they already are with bewildering restrictions with which it is impossible to comply.

But a Berkeley City Council majority led by Mayor Tom Bates and District 1 representative Linda Maio seems determined to be crowned the city with the most anti-homeless laws statewide.

The YMCA has so far refused to send a letter clarifying their stand on the new anti-homeless laws. YMCA President Fran Gallati and Executive Director Hae Won Rhow imply that they do not support an anti-homeless agenda, but we are entitled to assume as a community what the Berkeley City Council must assume: that Albert Chan and Hae Won Rhow were at the City Council on March 17 to support the anti-homeless laws until they produce a letter or statement saying otherwise.

If you are a YMCA member, please let the YMCA leadership know you are concerned about their support for this specific piece of legislation, and would like the YMCA, if it chooses to cheerlead politically, to support honest efforts to help the poor by increasing low-income housing through a moratorium on luxury housing in Berkeley, a free public campground, and a commitment to replacing the low-income housing that the City has, decade after decade, systematically converted to high-end housing.

The YMCA, if it wishes to participate politically, is most welcome to do so. But right now it has put itself in a difficult posture. No one *accidentally* finds themselves speaking specifically to item 19 on the Berkeley City Council agenda on March 17. And if the YMCA spoke out in favor of anti-homeless legislation somehow by accident, its leaders should, as a matter of course and for the community's sake, clarify their position.

On the Beach

by George Wynn

Out at the beach
he rubs the sleep
from his eyes

"The ones
with the power
they analyze us
never really talk to us
and when they do
in front
of T.V. cameras
their faces
seem so sour
as if
down deep
they really despise
us."

A Treasured CD

by Claire J. Baker

I've a restful CD —
slow harp melody
sprinkled with flute —
single notes and sweeping chords.
The gem begins and ends
with ocean waves and gulls.

I wish that a multitude
of street people could hear
this calming music;
in a sublime interlude
glide and soar for a while,
like gulls.

Arresting Hate Throughout Our Culture

This horrific attack targeted a church that has a long legacy in the struggle for African-American liberation and civil rights.

by the American Friends Service Committee

The killing of nine churchgoers at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 17, cuts to the very core of our hopes for racial justice and a peaceful world.

The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization that works to address the root causes of violence and oppression in communities worldwide, joins with all who are grieving in the wake of this purposeful act of mass violence.

The weight of this most recent tragedy presses down on us all, particularly on communities of color, where physical safety is far from guaranteed, even in a house of worship. This horrific attack targeted parishioners at a church that has a long legacy in the struggle for African-American liberation and civil rights.

Members of this church serve, as they have in the past, at the forefront of local and state politics and are strong advocates for racial justice. Mother Emanuel, as of this writing, seems to have been targeted as an attempt to terrorize people of color who participate in politics or advocate for rights and justice.

Arresting the perpetrator of this mass murder has resulted in the arrest of a person, but not the problem. We will make no progress as a society if we believe that justice is done simply by punishing one individual white supremacist. Racism is not just a historic problem or the work of a few individual "bad apples."

Racism — whether by direct intent or deeply entrenched structural factors — is a problem in all aspects of American life, including economics, housing, health care, criminal justice, policing, education, media coverage, among others.

We are living in a moment when many people in this country and abroad are seeing our nation's addictions to racism and violence for what they are: social ills woven deeply into the tapestry of our society. This is a vital social challenge for all of us, and one that white people have particular responsibility to address. None of us will be truly secure until our systems are built to protect the well-being of all people.

In memory of the nine beautiful souls lost to the violence of a man propelled by racist philosophies and a culture of violence that our society as a whole is accountable for, each of us must recommit to ending these evils at their root.

Acknowledging the effects of generations of racism and violence on our current condition is a first step. Taking concrete actions to transform our society, institutions, and relationships to end racism and violence is the next.

While the beloved community where all are treated justly feels far off today, we must press forward now more than ever toward that necessary goal.

We have found several good resources that address systemic racism and white supremacist culture that help shed new light on this moment of tragedy. Here are a few we recommend for individuals and other faith and social groups to explore:

"Take Down the Confederate Flag" by Ta-Nehisi Coates on white supremacy culture and the Confederate flag (*The Atlantic*).

"Only white people can save themselves from racism and white supremacism" by Baynard Woods (*Washington Post* op-ed).

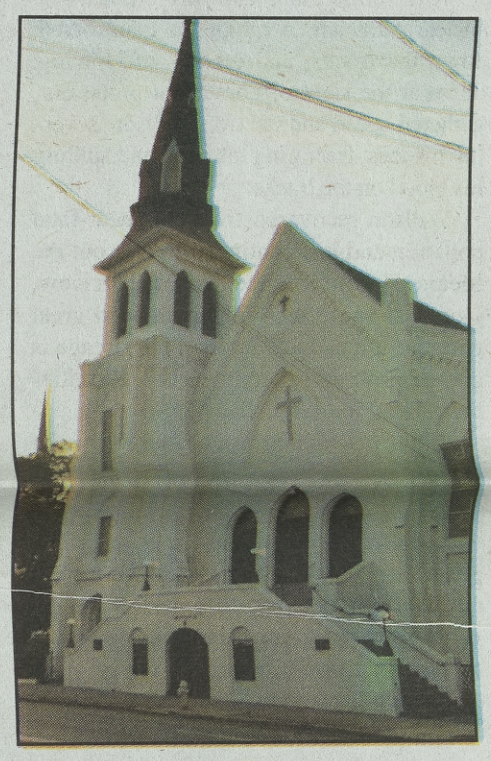
"Call it terrorism in Charleston" by Peter Bergen & David Sterman (CNN online).

"Schooled in disconnection: Waking up and struggling for social justice" by Lucy Duncan (Acting In Faith on AFSC blog).

Attend the White Privilege Conference, April 14-17, 2016, Philadelphia, PA.

A memorial service for the Charleston church shooting was held at Morris Brown AME Church on June 18. Photo: Nomader

Acknowledging the effects of generations of racism and violence is a first step. Taking concrete actions to transform our society to end racism and violence is the next.



The Emanuel AME Church is often referred to as "Mother Emanuel" and is the oldest AME church in the South.
Photo credit: Cal Sr from Newport, NC.

Airbnb Aggravates Housing Crisis in Berkeley

by Carol Denney

They flagrantly violate the law. They don't care about ordinances or regulations. They claim they have to ignore restrictions as a matter of necessity, because what else can they do?

No, we're not talking about homeless people, or panhandlers, or itinerant wanderers hitchhiking up and down the coast. We're talking about Berkeley home and apartment owners who have figured out that hitching a ride on Airbnb's "sharing economy," although entirely illegal, can make them lots of money.

San Francisco-based Airbnb was founded in 2008 as a way for vacationers to book what their website calls "unique accommodations around the world." Cutting to the economic heart of the matter, Airbnb boasts that it is "the easiest way for people to monetize their extra space and showcase it to millions."

The Berkeley City Council meeting on Tuesday, June 23, had at least a dozen people claiming that without the extra income they were making on short-term rentals they would lose their homes.

Lose their homes — an especially chilling prediction after the Homeless Task Force's push earlier that evening for a monolithic, one-stop "resource center" touted as a final solution to homelessness by anointed service providers and a graft-ridden boondoggle by others.

The typical Berkeley liberal would rather die than panhandle (a legal activity) but apparently has no issue with standing at the televised council meeting acknowledging that they routinely break the law.

The short-term rental of an empty bedroom is presented as benign by "sharing economy" fans who enthuse about "disrupting" conventional business models and point to lucrative ride-sharing businesses like Uber as unstoppable, which might be the case in Berkeley.

Members of the Berkeley City Council might see the potential for a collision of interests between homeowners making money off the kids' old bedroom and the neighbors now living next to a swinging party zone for out-of-towners, but they figure they'll pour a few regulations over the top and have a new tax stream.

To citizens who notice too late that their neighborhood no longer has peace, or parking, or a sense of connection, the City Council will look like it did something. There will be an avenue for taxation, a complaint mechanism and suddenly decades of efforts to protect neighborhoods from commercial impacts through zoning will be so shot with holes it will be useless.

The "sharing economy" is not about sharing. It is about making money off your home, your car, any resource you have. And making money off a neighborhood with little say in the matter and a community that needs more stability and housing, not less, for the inhabitants who are already here; and profiting at the expense of hospitality businesses and taxi drivers who struggle to comply with regulations and try to pay living wages.

Our minimum-wage workers already can't earn enough to pay market-rate rents in any state in the union. They have no way to compete with wealthy out-of-towners who find it fashionable to vacation on the cheap in what would have been an available apartment they could at least have shared with another.

Offering no objection to Airbnb and Uber, which have market capitalizations in the billions, cheapens community values and creates a larger community burden for the sake of the few short-sighted people who see a personal benefit for themselves alone.

The Berkeley City Council affirmed a vague recommendation for regulation which will bounce through various commissions, but they should have cited our housing crisis and just said no.

People literally sleeping on the street cannot seem to move their hearts, but cash-poor homeowners looking to monetize their million-dollar asset seem to have no trouble getting through.

People literally sleeping on the street cannot seem to move the hearts of City Council members, but cash-poor homeowners looking to monetize their million-dollar asset seem to have no trouble getting through.

Blockading the White Train

from page 1

"harsh and dreadful" nature of love in confronting the nuclear arsenal. A White Train en route to a military base in Charleston, South Carolina, crossed the Mississippi River into Memphis, where 40 protesters watched the train, and eight more stood on the tracks to block it.

Biema reported: "As the train crossed the bridge, its whistle shrieked and its brakes screeched. Yards away, it seemed unable to stop. Seven of the demonstrators backed off, but Sister Christine Dobrowolski stood firm. Just 10 feet away, the train squealed to a halt. The group returned to the tracks to pray, and six were later arrested for criminal trespass."

Sister Christine nearly gave her life in this vigil for peace. Love on the tracks was more costly than love in dreams.

Three years later, on Sept. 1, 1987, Brian Willson, a Vietnam veteran and anti-war protester, sat on the tracks at the Concord Naval Weapons Station in an effort to block trains carrying bombs and nuclear warheads. A munitions train roared down the tracks, and instead of slowing down at the sight of nonviolent protesters, gathered speed and ran over Willson, severing his legs, fracturing his skull and spilling his blood on the tracks.

Willson recovered from this near-fatal collision and has continued to live out the ideals of nonviolence. In an interview, Douglass said that Willson showed great courage and added, "Brian's pilgrimage is one of profound nonviolence. He continues on that journey today."

The tracks campaign continued into the late 1980s. Then, activists discovered a secret memo stating that the Department of Energy could no longer ship nuclear weapons on the White Train. The reason given in the DOE memo was: "IN VIEW OF THE GROWING ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, WITH ITS APPARENT FOCUS ON THE WHITE DEATH TRAIN."

The power of nonviolence had not stopped the nuclear arms race, but it had stopped the White Train in its tracks.

The Call to Resistance

When I was a journalism student in the late 1970s, my friends and I committed several acts of civil disobedience at the Rocky Flats plutonium trigger plant in Colorado and at Malmstrom Air Force Base, a command-and-control center for Minuteman missiles in Montana.

At that time, we read articles in peace journals and *CoEvolution Quarterly* that quoted Jim Douglass saying that movement activists needed to greatly deepen their acts of resistance in order to abolish nuclear weapons for the sake of humanity.

It was exactly the kind of prophetic call to action we had been waiting to hear, so when Ground Zero announced a large protest against the Trident submarine in the fall of 1979, my friends Karl Zanzig, David Armour and I answered the call.

At sunset on October 28, 1979, Karl, David and I climbed the fence, entered the Bangor naval base and walked inland to the place where nuclear warheads were stored in bunkers and guarded by Marines with shoot-to-kill orders. Just as we neared the bunkers, Marines drove up, pointed their rifles at us and arrested us.

I'll never forget what happened next. As we were handcuffed and led away, three deer suddenly emerged from the trees and watched us as we were put in vehicles. Three protesters were going to jail, but those three deer were free, and their freedom felt like nature's consolation to us, or its solidarity. I realize that

On board the Lizard of Woz sailboat, activists prepare to blockade the Trident submarine in Puget Sound. Darla Rucker sits at the rear in the far left. Terry Messman and Bruce Turner sit on the deck in the left foreground. Jim Douglass stands at far right.

must sound sentimental, but all three of us felt that we had been blessed by the forests and the wild creatures who were threatened by those weapons no less than the people living in Kitsap County.

After being sentenced, Karl Zanzig and I spent several months in Boron federal prison with Jim Douglass. Karl went on to organize the "Silence One Silo" campaign and was arrested for sitting on the concrete lid of a nuclear missile silo in Montana.

A year after my release from prison in July 1981, Ground Zero put out a call for a boat blockade of the Trident submarine in the summer of 1982. I was attending seminary in Berkeley and my first wife, Darla Rucker, was a director of Livermore Action Group. We traveled to Ground Zero for the blockade and boarded a sailboat, the Lizard of Woz, with Jim Douglass and our fellow Spirit affinity group member Bruce Turner.

With 46 other Trident protesters, we faced years in prison and went through a heavy pre-emptive attack from Coast Guard ships on August 12, 1982.

I told the story of the boat blockade in the June 2015 issue of *Street Spirit*. What still needs to be said is the high degree of trust and respect Darla and I had for Jim and Shelley Douglass in order to risk our lives in this way. The risks that people faced while climbing fences into the Bangor base, sailing to block a nuclear submarine, and sitting on tracks to stop the White Train, reveal the respect that were felt by many activists for the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action.

Theology of Revolution & Peace

Yet, as inspiring as these actions were, the theology I found in Douglass's first three books left an even deeper mark. In re-reading *The Nonviolent Cross*, *Resistance and Contemplation*, and *Lightning East to West*, I've rediscovered how greatly these books influenced my theological and political values, and what a strong foundation for activism they have given.

The Nonviolent Cross, written in 1968, is subtitled "A Theology of Revolution and Peace." Douglass presents a profound response to the anguish of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Auschwitz and Dresden, and reflects on the terrible suffering inflicted on the people of Vietnam.

The Nonviolent Cross is one of the most significant theological works on the great issues of war and peace, nuclear disarmament, resistance and revolution ever written. It offers a farsighted analysis of the ethical values underlying the just war tradition, the Christian perspective on peacemaking and Gandhian nonviolence.

But it is more than simply a fine work of theology. It is also a passionate call to resistance and revolution.

The Nonviolent Cross is the work of a Catholic theologian who had taught religion at Notre Dame, and worked closely with priests and archbishops, yet it was amazingly inclusive, open-minded and respectful of people from diverse faiths.

Douglass declared that Gandhi, a Hindu, was the greatest follower of Jesus in history, even though he obviously was not a Christian. He wrote with great admiration for the Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed in a Nazi death camp for resisting Hitler. Douglass even showed great empathy and respect for agnostics and atheists who cannot accept religious dogma, yet who often show great integrity in their search for the truth.

The Last of the Just

In this *Street Spirit* interview, when asked what book had inspired him the most in his life, Douglass named *The Last of the Just* by André Schwarz-Bart. Asked why this book has such deep meaning, he replied, "Because of the evil he was dealing with: the Holocaust. And the depth of the response to it from the heart of a Jewish man — Ernie Levy in the book — who walked the path of the just person and took on the suffering of the world. For me, he became a figure like Jesus."

The Last of the Just is an eloquent and anguished account of centuries of persecution, pogroms, and massacres that Jewish people suffered at the hands of so-called Christian nations from the time of the Crusades to the death camps at Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Treblinka.

In real life, the parents of André Schwarz-Bart were deported to Auschwitz and murdered in the Nazi concentration camp. In the tremendously moving final pages of *The Last of the Just,* the novel's hero Ernie Levy is exterminated with cyanide gas in Auschwitz, along with countless Jewish children and adults.

The Last of the Just was of such paramount importance to Douglass that he devoted an entire chapter to it in *The Nonviolent Cross*. He unflinchingly confronted Catholic and Christian churches for centuries of anti-Semitism that laid the foundations for the Third Reich's genocide.

Yet it is not only the violence and prejudice of the past that concerns him. It is also the present and the future.

In *The Nonviolent Cross*, Douglass asks these piercing questions: "Why has it been so necessary to defend what men call Christianity at every step of the way with weapons of a constantly increasing barbarity? If Christians are truly repentant for their deep involvement in the Third Reich's policy of genocide, why then are they today so solidly in support of thermonuclear genocide?"

Criticizing Vatican II for not going nearly far enough in confessing the guilt of Christendom for its long history of anti-Semitic prejudice, Douglass reminds us that Jesus himself was a Jew, just like all those persecuted in Christian nations over the centuries. As André Schwarz-Bart writes, Jesus was "a simple Jew like Golda's father, a merciful man and gentle."

Douglass includes a haunting quotation from *The Last of the Just* on the dedication page of *The Nonviolent Cross*: "The Christians say they love Christ, but I think they hate him without knowing it. So they take the cross by the other end and make a sword out of it and strike us with it."

Those who read this *Street Spirit* interview to its end will learn of Douglass's peace marches and arrests in the Middle East, and will find that he is critical not only of the U.S. wars against Iraq, but also of Israel's nuclear weapons and its oppression of the Palestinian people. The role of the peacemaker and the justice seeker is to resist *any* nation, whatever faith it may or may not profess, that wages unjust wars, stores nuclear weapons and commits acts of violence against civilians.

The Lamed Vav

Everett Gendler, an American rabbi who was deeply involved in the civil rights movement and in the Jewish Peace Fellowship, wrote of Douglass's chapter on *The Last of the Just*: "Is there anywhere so moving or profound an appreciation of *The Last of the Just*? ... I was so stirred that I was moved to include nearly all of it in our Yom Kippur service at the Jewish Center of Princeton, and I still find it one of the most affecting essays I have ever read."

To this day, Douglass continues to ponder the deep meaning of the novel's characterization of Ernie Levy as one of the Lamed Vav, the fabled 36 just and righteous people of Hebrew tradition.

The compassion of the Lamed Vav is essential for the life of humanity to continue, even though, according to this mystical teaching, the identities of the Lamed Vav are hidden from the world and may be unknown even to themselves.

Yet, for the sake of these 36 humble and hidden givers of justice and compassion, God preserves the world, even in the face of its cruelty, violence and injustice.

What can this mean for people who seek peace and justice, people who offer sanctuary to the homeless and food to the hungry?

Perhaps it means this: Whenever we make even a humble effort to seek peace or give mercy and compassion, more may depend on our work than we will ever know. It may be terribly important to not give up on our work for peace and justice.

It may be hidden from us, but in the long run, simple acts of kindness and compassion may matter more to humanity than we can possibly imagine.

Acts of Resistance and Works of Mercy

Street Spirit Interview with Jim Douglass, Part 2

Interview by Terry Messman

Street Spirit: *The White Train campaign mobilized people in hundreds of far-flung communities to stand in nonviolent resistance along the tracks where nuclear weapons were transported. How did the White Train campaign get started?*

Jim Douglass: Well, the White Train campaign began as the Tracks campaign at a time when we didn't yet know there was a White Train. Shelley and I had been looking at a house for years next to the Trident base as a location that was analogous to the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, which was itself a piece of land 3.8 acres in size alongside the Trident base that we had bought as a community.

At another location alongside the fence surrounding the base, there was a house over the tracks leading into the Trident base. We thought that if we lived in that house, we would have our eyes opened to what was going into the base. To use Archbishop Hunthausen's analogy, it would be a little bit like having a house alongside the tracks leading into the Auschwitz concentration camp.

So I knocked on the door of that house periodically for several years, asking the people who owned the house if they wanted to rent or sell it. They always said no, but eventually the house was empty and we found they were selling the home. With the help of friends, we bought the house.

Spirit: *Knock and it shall be opened.*

Douglass: That's the statement of Jesus that we were inspired by. So we then lived in the house that had originally belonged to the stationmaster of a railroad yard that serviced the Trident base. You literally had to cross the tracks to get into our house; there was no other access to it.

So we then began to call together people who lived alongside the tracks near the Hercules propellant plant in Utah which regularly makes shipments to the Trident base of the highly volatile fuel propellant for the Trident missiles.

We began monitoring those shipments. We would see them a couple times a week. So we began the tracks campaign around those shipments, with people between Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Trident submarine base near Seattle. We held a retreat for people along the railroad tracks in the summer of 1981. That was the beginning of the tracks campaign.

'THE TRAIN OUT OF HELL'

Spirit: *Soon people were conducting vigils all along the railroad tracks. How long did it take before you discovered that nuclear warheads were being shipped on the White Train?*

Douglass: In December 1981, we saw the first White Train come in. We were warned by a reporter that he had seen such a train north of Seattle. He said he had a feeling that it had something to do with the Trident base, because it "looked like the train out of hell."

It was a heavily armored, all-white train. Several cars on the train had turrets on them where Department of Energy guards could put guns through slits to defend the train.

The reporter thought, "This is carrying big-time weapons." So he called us and asked if we'd ever seen it. And we said, no. So when I received the call from that reporter, I went outside our house and a White Train was coming down the tracks! I took pictures of the cars of the train.

Then we did our research and discovered that the assembly point of all nuclear weapons was at the Pantex plant in Amarillo, Texas. With the help of train buffs, we identified all the routes between Amarillo and the Bangor Naval Base, and then waited for the train to come out of the Bangor base, and then followed the train with the help of people at key junctions back to the Pantex plant and confirmed that it did come from that location in Amarillo, Texas. So that was the beginning of the White Train campaign.

Good Friday/Passover walk from the 16th St. Baptist Church in Birmingham for the Trident train tracks on April 17, 1992.

Spirit: *So the first step of the White Train campaign involved researching the train routes and exposing the shipments of nuclear warheads. What was the second step of the campaign?*

Douglass: Next, we mapped out more of the routes. Again it required train buffs. Tom Rawson, who was a wonderful peace-and-justice singer in Seattle and who also had been a follower of trains all his adult life, suddenly became a great asset in our work on the White Train.

We mapped out all the possible routes to the Trident base, and then we contacted people in all of those cities and began filling in the gaps. In the course of the tracks campaign, which continued through the 1980s, we had connections with people in over 250 towns and cities along the routes of the train.

And thanks to a woman named Hedy Sawadsky, a wonderful Mennonite friend, we had a watcher in Amarillo, Texas. She moved to live in Amarillo to watch the Pantex plant and identify the departures of the White Train. That was her contemplative/active vocation for several years.

Spirit: *So these train watchers enabled Ground Zero to get the word out about the departures of the White Train and mobilize your network for vigils?*

Douglass: Sure. It was a network and once it went into action, we could follow the train all the way and people either vigiled by the tracks or sat in front of the train. They would give early notice to the police about what they planned to do. Nobody wanted to get run over by the train.

Spirit: *The tracks campaign really flourished, with many acts of civil disobedience in dozens of cities.*

Douglass: Many, many acts of nonviolent civil disobedience.

Spirit: *It's kind of amazing that, with your help, the White Train built up a community of peace-loving people stretching for hundreds of miles.*

The White Train transported nuclear weapons across the nation. Photo: Chris Guenzler

A secret Department of Energy memo said the DOE could not send any more White Trains. Why? The reason given was: "IN VIEW OF THE GROWING ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, WITH ITS APPARENT FOCUS ON THE WHITE DEATH TRAIN."

Douglass: Yes, that was the irony of the tracks campaign. The railroad tracks became a connection of community along the route of a Holocaust train. The tracks campaign went on into the late 1980s.

Spirit: *It all began with only a handful of activists and train buffs. How did it feel when it blossomed so quickly into a campaign that involved hundreds of communities all up and down the tracks?*

Douglass: It was an experience of hope: hope spelled "community." [laughing] From the very beginning, we called that community "the Agape community."

Spirit: *Why the Agape community?*

Douglass: Agape means "God's love." It is God. Love and truth are the primary names for God, not only in Gandhi's vocabulary, but in the vocabulary of many great religious traditions. So it was a way of realizing that love and truth in action against a threat to all life on earth as posed by our weapons and policies.

That was a great development out of the Trident campaign. The Trident campaign and the tracks campaign are really the same campaign, but the tracks gave it a whole new dimension. We're not the only bunch of people who were working in that way.

As you know well, Brian Willson and the Nuremberg Actions community were doing the same thing at the Concord Naval Weapons Station, and we were in close communications with them, and with Brian who came to visit us at Ground Zero after he had been run over by the train. [*Editor:* See "Blood on the Tracks: Brian Willson Dances in Resistance to Weapons of Mass Murder," *Street Spirit,* September 2012.]

Spirit: *What did you feel about Brian's sacrifice in losing his legs while blocking a weapons train at the Concord base?*

Douglass: He is the only person in the world, I think, who could have had that happen to him and who would smile when I said, "Brian you're the perfect person to have been run over by that train."

Because he has such courage. And he has such a complete absorption of his own experience from Vietnam and from going through the jungles and roads of Nicaragua where he could have had his legs blown off at any time by the Contra mines. Those weapons were then blocked by Brian on the tracks of the Concord Naval Weapons Station, where they were being shipped to Nicaragua when he was run over by that train. Brian's pilgrimage is one of profound nonviolence. He continues on that journey today.

Spirit: *Brian not only smiles, he* ***danced*** *on the railroad tracks at Concord on the anniversary of the loss of his legs. He* ***dances*** *on those prosthetic legs.*

Douglass: He does indeed.

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Street Spirit Interview With Jim Douglass

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STOPPING THE TRAIN IN ITS TRACKS

Spirit: *When did you and Shelley move to Birmingham, Alabama?*

Douglass: We moved to Birmingham in September 1989. The White Trains started going to the East Coast as well as to the West Coast, first to the Charleston Naval Weapons Station and then to the Kings Bay Georgia Trident submarine base.

As the trains began going east, we felt we could help along that route. We stopped in Birmingham, Alabama, and met people who welcomed us there, so we came. But by the time we got here, a year later, the reason we moved here had ceased to exist before we arrived, unknown to us.

The tracks campaign had reached the point where the Department of Energy stopped sending the White Trains. But they didn't inform us, of course, so we were in Birmingham a fair length of time before it became obvious that they weren't sending the trains anymore.

Eventually, through the Freedom of Information Act, we had that confirmed.

Spirit: *What did you discover through the Freedom of Information Act?*

Douglass: A secret Department of Energy memorandum, dated August 6, 1985, declassified in 1990. It said the DOE could not send any more White Trains.

Why? The reason given was: "IN VIEW OF THE GROWING ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, WITH ITS APPARENT FOCUS ON THE WHITE DEATH TRAIN."

The DOE memo was typed in caps, and "WHITE DEATH TRAIN" (with no quote marks around their phrase) was their own matter-of-fact description —written on the 40th anniversary of the Hiroshima bomb.

Spirit: *So the DOE's own documents show that the White Train shipments were stopped because of the tracks campaign?*

Douglass: Sure.

Spirit: *That shows the powerful effect all those communities of resistance were having on the federal government.*

Douglass: It shows the effect we were having, but that didn't mean that we had stopped the Trident submarine. It just means that the campaign was a means by which people in hundreds of communities recognized the ways in which the arms race is present in our lives.

Spirit: *Recognized it, and took a personal stand against the arms race.*

Douglass: Yes, and took a stand against it. We didn't succeed in "stopping" the train because that train, in terms of the nuclear arms race, kept on going.

However, we took a step as part of a larger movement. We learned that through the initiative of a young man whose parents, Glen and Karol Milner, have worked with Ground Zero for decades. Glen was arrested for blocking the White Train.

Years later, his son, Aaron, did a class paper in high school on the tracks campaign. He queried the DOE about the impact of the tracks campaign. In December 1994, Aaron received a remarkable response from Gail L. Bradshaw, the acting director of the Negotiations and Analysis Division of the Department of Energy.

"Popular movements, and even civil disobedience," Director Bradshaw wrote, "can be an alerting mechanism, causing citizens to think more seriously about an issue... A result of the nuclear disarmament movement was, often, intensified awareness and a more informed public dialogue generating a more responsive policy approach."

In other words, a U.S. government official is acknowledging here that such demonstrations may have prevented a nuclear war at a critical time.

Members ot the Walk for a Peaceful Future demonstrate on June 6, 1992, on Mount Carmel, above Atlit Military Prison in support of Israeli soldiers imprisoned for refusing to serve in the Occupied Territories. Photo credit: Anna L. Snowdon

Spirit: *I've always felt that way, Jim. Seriously. I've always believed that the massive anti-nuclear movements in the U.S. and throughout Europe helped to avoid the ultimate catastrophe at the moment in the 1980s when the arms race had escalated to an extremely dangerous level.*

Douglass: You know, it was all part of a much larger movement. And that larger movement, of which the tracks campaign was one key element, succeeded in keeping us alive during that period. So I think it was a good thing.

THE NONVIOLENT CROSS

Spirit: *Your first book,* The Nonviolent Cross, *is one of the most profound studies of nonviolence, peace theology and the nuclear arms race. What was your inspiration in writing* The Nonviolent Cross*?*

Douglass: Dorothy Day. I was introduced to Dorothy Day in spirit when I was a first-year student at Santa Clara University. A great English professor at Santa Clara, Herbert Burke, introduced our class to the story of a group of people in New York City who refused to take shelter during a Civil Defense drill.

During the drills, millions of people were going into fallout shelters with the assumption that a hydrogen bomb had fallen on New York City in the spring of 1957. Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker and members of the Living Theater went to a park instead and were sent to jail for their noncooperation.

When our class at Santa Clara University was introduced to that, we all objected to the Catholic Worker and those who non-cooperated. But I was taken by what they had done and I started reading the *Catholic Worker* newspaper and I wound up writing for it.

Spirit: *If your immediate reaction was disagreement with their protest, why were you still interested in the Catholic Worker?*

Douglass: Well, they were not only refusing to cooperate with nuclear war, they were also living out the Sermon on the Mount. It was all of a piece. What electrified me from their act of resistance to air raid drills in the park was that they were resisting preparations for a war that could destroy humanity. They were resisting it on the basis of the teachings of Jesus.

So I felt that here was an answer to a terrible question: Would the human race continue to live? Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker were saying, "Yes, through the grace of God, and through a commitment to act on the teachings of Jesus."

Spirit: *In what other ways did you feel they were living out the values of the Sermon on the Mount?*

Douglass: They fed those who needed it. They housed those who needed it. They lived according to Jesus's teachings of providence. They did the whole works. They carried out the whole vision.

Spirit: *Now, more than 50 years later, you've co-founded a Catholic Worker house with your wife Shelley Douglass. Dorothy Day has had a long, long influence on your life.*

Douglass: That is true. [laughing] Back then, I felt called to write *The Nonviolent Cross* because that was the way to respond to the awful question of nuclear war. I believed deeply that Jesus and the Catholic Worker, in our own context, and those other people who believed in nonviolence, were living out the answer.

GANDHI, JESUS AND NONVIOLENCE

Spirit: *How is the nonviolent cross a response to "the awful question" of nuclear war?*

Douglass: The nonviolent cross is, of course, a paradox, because a crucifixion is not nonviolent. But I had been introduced to Gandhi at Santa Clara University, and Gandhi was the way into Jesus in my book, *The Nonviolent Cross*.

Spirit: *The teachings of Gandhi have always been at the center of your books and your peace activism.*

Douglass: I was convinced that Gandhi was the greatest disciple of Jesus. And that was a wonderful truth because then I wasn't restricted by dogma. Instead, I opened up to the truth of Jesus through a Hindu who was carrying it all out without being a Christian.

Spirit: *Gandhi's vision of nonviolence comes right out of the Bhagavad Gita and The Upanishads, but it is also very close in spirit to the Sermon on the Mount.*

Douglass: That is certainly right.

Spirit: *In The Nonviolent Cross, you looked at the profound messages of spirituality and justice in such figures as Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Boris Pasternak. What book would you say has inspired you the most?*

Douglass: *The Last of the Just* by André Schwarz-Bart.

Spirit: *Why was* The Last of the Just *so meaningful to you?*

Douglass: Because of the evil he was dealing with: the Holocaust. And the depth of the response to it from the heart of a Jewish man — Ernie Levy in the book — who walked the path of the just person and took on the suffering of the world. For me, he became a figure like Jesus.

The *Last of the Just* told the story of Ernie Levy and Christianity's violence against the Jewish people as the backdrop to the Holocaust. To understand that history behind the Shoah or the Holocaust, and to understand a nonviolent response to it in the life of Ernie Levy, was just transforming for me. That book is the basis for one of the chapters in *The Nonviolent Cross* and a good part of my inspiration.

Spirit: *Who else do you draw on as inspirations on this path of nonviolence?*

Douglass: I always think of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker and Gandhi. And Martin Luther King, and Dan and Phil Berrigan, and Shelley Douglass. Another key person in my life was Thomas Merton. They have walked the talk, and embodied the vision of Jesus in word and deed.

A PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

Spirit: *In what way is Shelley Douglass such a key inspiration in your life?*

Douglass: Because she knows my faults better than anyone else on earth and we're still together. And she is the person who I identify most closely with Dorothy Day. We have a house of hospitality and it's Shelley who bears the brunt of that. I'm mainly writing and researching. And there's no better writer I know than Shelley. Like Dorothy Day, she's a great writer. So she's writing and living like Dorothy Day.

Spirit: *You and Shelley have been a partnership for peace and justice for several decades. Can you describe that a little? What has been the nature of your working together all these years?*

Douglass: We've been married since 1970, so that's over 44 years now. During that time, we've been separated for about two years, from either she or I being in jail for acts of nonviolent civil disobedience. I think that is a key to understanding the mutual vision we have, which is for a world in which people love one another and treat each other as we try to act toward each other. We have believed that since we were married.

We married each other by exchanging rings. No clergy were present. We committed ourselves from that time on to living out the Gospels. That's what marriage is all about for a couple of people who did then, and still do, believe in the teachings of Jesus, and also of his greatest follower, Gandhi, and of the greatest American disciple of Jesus, Dorothy Day. So put that together and that's what Shelley and I are trying to live out in the Catholic Worker movement today. We have had a Catholic Worker house since 1992.

Spirit: *What was it about the vision of the Catholic Worker that led you to form Mary's House in Birmingham, Alabama?*

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Street Spirit Interview With Jim Douglass

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Douglass: Well, Shelley in particular, who had lived in Catholic Worker houses earlier in her life, had felt called for a long time to be at the heart of a Catholic Worker community. So I was joining in that vision when we moved to Birmingham and discovered that there were no White Trains going through here.

We asked ourselves why we were in Birmingham, Alabama, and we felt it was an ideal place for a Catholic Worker because one day, at a Catholic church we were attending, the priest told us he had a problem and maybe we could help him with it. So we followed him out of the church and found that the problem happened to be a couple with four children who were driving from Florida to Washington state — the longest journey one can take across the United States. When they arrived in Birmingham, they were running out of gas and food. They had been going from church to church (seeking help) and at the church just before they came to this Catholic church, they had been turned away by an armed guard.

These people, who happened to be Native Americans, were looking for help, so we took them home with us to our little house by the tracks. They stayed with us for a couple nights as we went around town looking for resources for them — which we found were very limited. No shelters were available for married people with children. At other shelters, the wife and husband and children would have to be split up. So that was our call to start just such a Catholic Worker house for homeless families. We have that to this day.

Spirit: *What has it been like to live in a small Catholic Worker community?*

Douglass: We actually have two houses because we moved into the house along the train tracks for a campaign that never really happened. So that residence has become more of a hermitage, a place of writing and of prayer. Then we have our house of hospitality for homeless families, which is in another part of Birmingham.

Both are in predominantly poor areas and Shelley and I go back and forth between the two. She is mainly involved in the hospitality, and I am mainly involved in research and writing. But we both do both the hospitality and writing.

Dorothy Day's Works of Mercy

Spirit: *Dorothy Day described the works of mercy as resisting war, comforting the afflicted, and giving hospitality to the hungry and homeless. From your personal experience, how would you describe the mission of the Catholic Worker?*

Douglass: The Catholic Worker vision is not to be another agency for the poor, but to live with people who are overcome by that form of oppression. Dorothy Day was inspired by a man named Peter Maurin, a French peasant who was a student of the social teachings of the Catholic Church and of the Gospels.

The two of them began a movement in the early 1930s which said as its bottom line: Respond to all those in need. Respond to all the evils of war and injustice in our society by taking them on. And establish houses of hospitality so that in everybody's home, there can be a place for those who need help, because these are our brothers and sisters, just as much as the immediate members of our family.

Spirit: *Many consider Dorothy Day one of the most significant figures in the history of nonviolence. What have you learned personally from her life's work?*

Douglass: Dorothy Day led that vision by being repeatedly arrested for issues ranging from the United Farmworkers to peace and nuclear war. Even before she became a Catholic Worker, she was involved in the suffragist movement for women's right to vote. She was arrested repeatedly for resisting nuclear weapons.

She spent a significant amount of time in jail. It's really a way of trying to live the vision of the Sermon on the Mount and taking it on personally. "Personalism" is the key to the Catholic Worker movement. Personalism means that a teaching of the Gospel only becomes real through our relationships to one another. So a Catholic Worker house is not only a way of caring for people. It's a way of being with people and working together in community.

Spirit: *Dorothy Day and Gandhi taught that poverty is the worst form of violence. Gandhi said that those working for justice must keep in mind the face of the poorest person they have met and ask how their actions would affect that person.*

Douglass: Poverty is at the heart of violence because the weapons that we have in our midst that now threaten to destroy the earth are means of protecting privilege. That's why they exist. And the people who are at the bottom of that pyramid of violence are all over the world, of course, and we have to seek them out.

This society and its institutions deliberately create barriers among us — like freeways that arch over the poorest areas of the country. Or people fly over those areas in planes or ignore in one way or another that form of violence. What Gandhi did, and what Dorothy Day did, was to instead live in community with people on the lowest level of society, without pretending that they could ever experience that poverty themselves.

Because whether you're Gandhi or Dorothy Day, you have immense resources that you have developed by simply responding to people in that way. Because they will join you and that gives you enormous power in solidarity and community.

Before he became the one we now identify as Gandhi, Gandhi was simply one lone individual trying to be a British lawyer. But once he identified himself with the poorest people in India, he became, in a sense, hundreds of millions of people. That's why he was giving us that teaching of his: Only if you can help the poorest person you have ever encountered by what you're doing... That was his daily way of life.

Raids on the Unspeakable

Spirit: *You often cite the Trappist priest and monk Thomas Merton for his insights on contemplative prayer, war and peace, nuclear weapons, racism and nonviolence. During our blockade of the Trident submarine, you even named your boat, the "Thomas Merton."*

Douglass: I was corresponding with Thomas Merton from 1961 until his death in 1968. I also knew Merton personally because in 1965 I taught at Bellarmine College in Louisville, Kentucky, and I was visiting Merton. [*Editor:* Thomas Merton was a Trappist contemplative who lived in the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky.]

Merton had a deep influence on my understanding of nonviolence, to the point that I was hugely influenced by him in writing my book called *Resistance and Contemplation*. Merton put together the contemplative life with nonviolent resistance as nobody else did. Not even Dan Berrigan did it as deeply as Merton did.

Merton's books were very important. Merton's *Raids on the Unspeakable* were a series of essays he wrote in the 1960s and it forms the basis for my understanding of the assassinations of the 1960s.

In a poetic way that was deeply contemplative, Merton was exploring the unspeakable evil that included nuclear war, the Holocaust, the Vietnam War, racism and the assassinations of the 1960s. And he used the term "The Unspeakable." It's where we don't want to go, and it's what we can't even say because if we do say it, we realize the responsibility to go into a realm of resisting evil that has enormous consequences, both hopeful and traumatic.

Spirit: *Why did you write in* Resistance and Contemplation *that the interaction between political resistance and contemplation is so vital in nonviolent movements?*

Douglass: Well, at the time, and today as well, there was a tension between those who were resisting the war and the racism and the sexism by fairly direct and extremely active means, and those who were turning on and dropping out, especially through drugs, or through countercultural activities that didn't engage directly the oppression. Nonviolence is an integration of those two dimensions in a deeper way. Gandhi and Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton are all examples of a fusion of direct action — especially resistance to evil on a huge social scale — and prayer, with an emphasis on the contemplative side.

Spirit: *For many, the cross is a vague spiritual symbol, but the Roman Empire used the cross to execute revolutionaries. How do you understand the meaning of the cross for nonviolent movements?*

Douglass: The person I was most influenced by was Gandhi. Gandhi's great statement regarding the cross is in his Christmas sermon to British people on a boat returning to India after a conference in London. He was asked to talk about Jesus on Christmas Day.

He gave an extraordinary reflection, the heart of which is his statement, "Living Christ means a living cross. Without it, life is a living death. Jesus lived and died in vain if he did not teach us to regulate the whole of life by the eternal Law of Love." I've been thinking about that ever since I first heard it.

Spirit: *What does it mean to you?*

Douglass: It means that to understand the cross as an acceptance of suffering through resistance to evil is to engage in a transformation of that evil. When I hear those words, it is just embodied by Gandhi's life. It would mean nothing apart from Gandhi. I know his story and I loved his story. I tried to understand the cross in relation to the message of Gandhi's life.

He accepts suffering in order to resist it at a level that is impossible to understand intellectually or theoretically. It has to be embodied. And embodying it means walking the same path that Dorothy Day has walked, where you live with people in poverty, and you go to jail in order to resist wars and violence of every kind, and you are prepared to give your life in order to stand with people who are being destroyed by our own government.

That was Gandhi's whole life and it's Dorothy Day's life and it's what Shelley and I aspire to as part of the Catholic Worker movement. It's the story of the early Church and it's the story of liberation movements all around the world today. Of course, they're not necessarily Christian, and Gandhi was not a Christian, but he embodied the meaning of Jesus's cross.

Gandhi's Vision of Satyagraha: Holding Firm to Truth

Spirit: *Gandhi referred to campaigns of nonviolent resistance as "satyagraha" — holding firm to truth. What are the essential steps in building satyagraha campaigns, both in Gandhi's era and in our time?*

Douglass: The most basic thing is the *commitment* of the people who seek to engage in such a campaign. There would have never been satyagraha campaigns in Gandhi's life if he hadn't created communities out of which they could be waged.

The ashrams in South Africa and later in India were the bases of his work. And even though the number of people living in community and taking vows of nonviolence was small, those people were totally freed to work together and to respond to the specific evils they focused on. As Gandhi always taught, you can't take on everything in the world, so you focus by identifying a social evil, as for example we did in the Trident campaign.

That's a following of truth in one's own life and then in one's community, wherever a group of people join together. We joined together in a community called Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action. Gandhi created ashrams in South Africa and India, and then out of those bases, they constructed campaigns.

The first step in a campaign is *knowledge*. It's research and understanding. So whether it's racism in South Africa, or a nuclear submarine base near Seattle, Washington, you study and you try to understand. In our case, it meant understanding a nuclear submarine that could destroy the world. How did we educate ourselves? Through a man named Robert Aldridge who helped design the weapon.

So you go to the sources and you understand the problem, and then you open yourself to the people on the other side of the issue. In our case, when Robert Aldridge came to support our campaign in Honolulu, Hawaii, and when we learned that his occupation was designing the Trident missile, he educated us on that — and resigned his job.

So that's the way a campaign works, across all lines. If you start denouncing the

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Anti-nuclear activists were arrested around the nation for blocking the White Train.

That was the irony of the tracks campaign. The railroad tracks became a connection of community along the route of a Holocaust train.

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other side from day one, you're never going to hear what the perspective is from the other side. You won't learn from a Bob Aldridge what the nature of the problem is.

Then, you need to be in the heart of it. You can't deal with it from the outside, as we were doing when the Trident campaign began. Shelley and I were living in Canada. Well, the Trident base was located across from Seattle, Washington, so we moved there. As Thomas Merton teaches, and as Gandhi taught, you can't do things from the outside. You have to do it from within, both spiritually from within and communally from within.

You can't come in from liberal enclaves and go to the Kitsap County area where the Trident base is located, and hold big demonstrations, and then go back to your liberal homes and relax. You have to live with the people who are economically dependent on Trident and experience their pressures in order to disarm a submarine base that involves thousands of workers. So we moved down and found that house next to the base.

This is a step-by-step process that Gandhi lived out, and we were trying to follow in his footsteps. And then you have to accept responsibility. Rather than denouncing Trident workers for doing the wrong thing, we have to say, "We who are involved in silence and as passive witnesses to the arms build-ups in our country, we have to take responsibility for it."

So that means carrying out actions that, under international law, are necessary, but the courts send us to jail for committing. In other words, "Walk the talk. Live the verse you're citing from Jesus or Gandhi."

Spirit: *Gandhi was already of central significance in your theology of nonviolence in your first book. Two of the most important chapters were "From Bonhoeffer to Gandhi" and "From Gandhi to Christ." Why was Gandhi such a key inspiration in the works of a Christian theologian?*

Douglass: There are two reasons that come immediately to mind as to why Gandhi is especially important to me.

Number one, he is my way of understanding the life of Jesus. He is the lens through which I see Jesus, because I believe Gandhi is Jesus's greatest follower in history, bar none. Number two, he has given all of us a way in our lives to carry out the message of Jesus and of whomever else would be in the pantheon of people we wish to follow. That method he described as his "experiments with truth."

Spirit: *Gandhi even titled his autobiography, "The Story of My Experiments with Truth." What did he mean by experiments?*

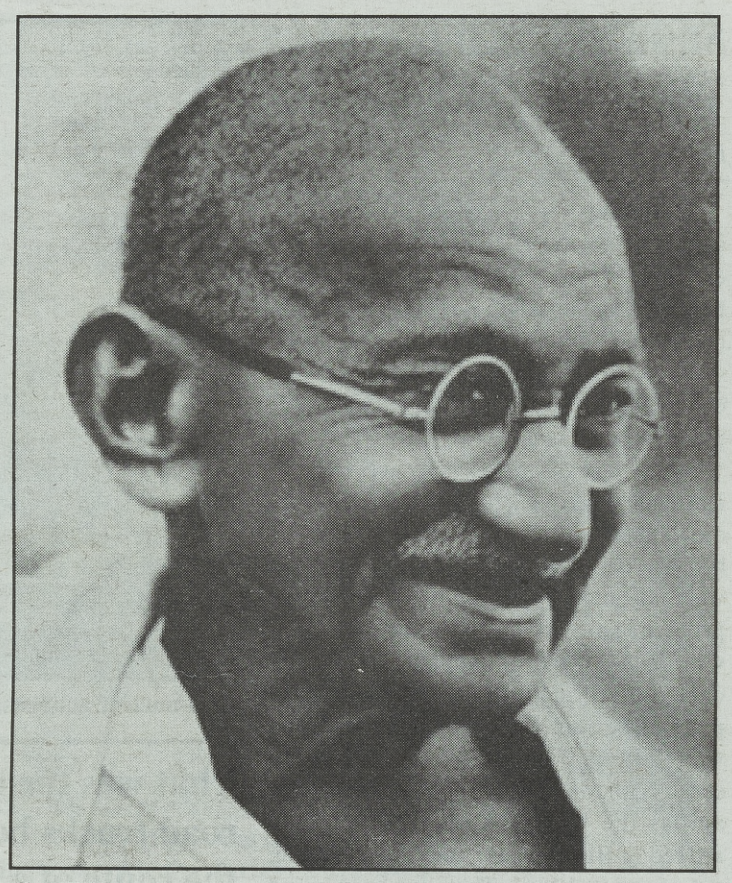
Douglass: An experiment with truth simply means doing, step by step, what one has come to believe most deeply. In other words, there is no such thing in Gandhi's understanding of truth as an abstract truth. Truth in the abstract doesn't exist as satyagraha, or truth-force. The only way it becomes satyagraha, truth-force, is if it is experimented with, and practiced in the most powerful ways that each of us can discover.

Spirit: *How did his experiments in truth lead to a vision of love and reverence for life?*

Douglass: He put truth and love as two sides of the same coin. On one side of the coin — and on one side of our being — is the process of discovering more deeply what we believe as we experiment with truth. But on the other side of truth is the nature of this process through relationships with other people. Nobody experiments with truth as a solitary individual. We experiment with truth in our relationships with other people, each of whom is the presence of God. And those experiments have to be done if one is going to deepen in truth through nonviolence, through *ahimsa,* through love.

So in that process, rather than force the other person into following our truth, we must instead respect and deepen in dialogue and understanding with that other person, no matter who he or she may be, but especially if that other person considers us as enemies.

Dorothy Day founded the Catholic Worker with Peter Maurin.



Gandhi's satyagraha campaigns were based on "truth-force."

"Gandhi and Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton are all examples of a fusion of direct action — especially resistance to evil on a huge social scale — and prayer, with an emphasis on the contemplative side." — Jim Douglass

Spirit: *Many have questioned whether nonviolence is still relevant given the vast increase in technological weapons and computerized surveillance. What does Gandhi have to teach us in today's world of ever more destructive weaponry?*

Douglass: He has to teach that world what another disciple of Jesus named Martin Luther King sums up in three words: *nonviolence or non-existence.* We need to explore with all these saints and teachers — with Gandhi and Jesus and the Buddha — the depth at the bottom of every great religion, which is the power of nonviolence, of love and of truth.

Gandhi summarized it all by saying, "Truth is God." And he put "truth" first because it is through the process of discovering the power of truth that we can understand love. Yet, on the other hand, it is only through the process of relationships that are loving that we can deepen in the truth. Truth and love are two sides of the same coin. It is that process of seeking truth and love in a communal setting that will lead to the new world that Jesus called the reign of God, and that Gandhi called truth-force, love-force and soul-force, and that Martin Luther King called the Beloved Community.

Spirit: *Gandhi saw nonviolence as a revolutionary force that could overthrow an empire. Yet, some criticize nonviolence as a form of pacifism — too passive to overcome powerful regimes. How do you respond to these criticisms?*

Douglass: I don't like the term "pacifism" because it immediately suggests something passive. And it's also related specifically to one issue — that of war.

I don't like the term "passive resistance," nor did Gandhi. In fact, he replaces it very specifically with the terminology of "satyagraha." There is nothing — absolutely nothing — that is passive about satyagraha. My basic understanding of what we, in our context, always refer to as nonviolence is satyagraha, because truth force is not in any way a negative thing. It's a positive thing. It's the most powerful force in the universe, literally.

Spirit: *Why do you believe it is the most powerful force in the universe?*

Douglass: Because truth is God, and God is love. There is no force more powerful in the universe than the force of truth and love. Is that passive? It means the force that overcame the British empire in the hands of a very insignificant young man, who chose to experiment with truth.

Assassinations and Martyrs

Spirit: *In writing about the assassinations of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and the Kennedys, why do you use Thomas Merton's phrase, "The Unspeakable," to refer to those murders?*

Douglass: The process that I described as "The Unspeakable" involves killing the person in a covert way that denies the truth of even how the person is being killed in order to destroy his or her vision.

The purpose is not simply to kill that one man or woman, but it's to destroy the vision. Their vision is destroyed especially by what happens after the killing, and that's the destruction of the vision through lies, through propaganda, through the distribution of enormous cover-ups.

This second part of the process is, I believe, worse than the murder of the individual person — Gandhi or John F. Kennedy or Malcom X or Martin Luther King or Robert Kennedy. The lies about that person and about how he is killed are worse than the actual killing.

Spirit: *Why do you say the lies are worse than the assassination itself?*

Douglass: Because it is an effort to destroy that person's communal power, which is our salvation. As Malcolm X said, two days before his assassination: "It's a time for martyrs now. And if I'm to be one, it will be in the cause of brotherhood. That's the only thing that can save this country." [*Editor:* Malcolm X said those words on Feb. 19, 1965, two days before he was murdered.] We have to understand what these martyrs were witnessing to.

Spirit: *What were they witnessing to? And how does their martyrdom serve the cause of humanity?*

Douglass: They're witnessing to the power of God, of love, of the transformation of all of humanity. They don't die by being shot or destroyed. The power of the person is a power that goes way, way, way beyond death. Martyrdom means witness, means testimony.

The testimony of Martin Luther King didn't end on April 4, 1968, the day he was assassinated. Everybody knows that, even if we don't understand the depth of his power. And we certainly don't believe that the power of Jesus ended at the time he died on the cross. That power of the witness to the truth and love that can save humanity does not end with that person's death. It deepens.

So the worst kind of act against truth is not the terrible act of inflicting death on the person. It's the even more terrible act of denying his or her truth — the truth of what they were dying for and how that so threatened the powers that be in their context, that the powers that be took their lives.

After his death, the government found ways to keep secret the incredible power of Martin Luther King's vision and the fact that the United States government killed him in order to destroy that vision.

Middle East Peace Actions

Spirit: *In recent years, where have your travels taken you in seeking peace in the Middle East?*

Douglass: I've been to Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Iraq. The first trip I took to the Middle East was within a month of our arrival in Birmingham.

Spirit: *What led you to take that trip?*

Douglass: A picture in the newspaper. I was writing a book called *The Nonviolent Coming of God* and trying to understand Jesus's life and death, and I saw a picture in the Birmingham newspaper of women walking together through the streets of a town identified as Beit Sahour, next to Bethlehem. They all had their hands held high making the peace sign, their faces smiling. They were celebrating their resistance to the Israeli Defense Forces which had surrounded their town for a month because the members of the town refused to pay their taxes.

That town, Beit Sahour, which is the traditional site of the shepherds' field in Luke's Gospel, had become an example to people across the globe of the refusal to cooperate with their own oppression.

They said, "We do not want to pay for

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the weapons that kill our children." So they stopped paying taxes. I looked at that picture of these radiantly smiling women, and I thought, "What a story, coming right out of the context of where Jesus was."

Spirit: *After seeing this picture, how long was it until you traveled there?*

Douglass: I learned that Scott Kennedy from the Santa Cruz Resource Center for Nonviolence was going to Beit Sahour and he asked me if I would like to come. So within a couple weeks, I was walking into Beit Sahour with Scott Kennedy and about 10 peace activists with Palestinian guides who were helping us around the Israeli blockade.

We then went to the West Bank and Gaza, smuggled into these areas by Palestinians who wanted us to see and experience what was going on.

That was my first journey into the Gospels via the analogous experience of people today in those areas. One member of our group was an American rabbi, Mike Robinson, and we met with Israeli peace leaders. We were meeting with people on both sides of the green line which divided the occupation of Palestine from the State of Israel. We met with Jewish leaders as well as Palestinian leaders in the struggle against that occupation.

Spirit: *What kind of impact did your first trip to the Middle East have?*

Douglass: Well, in terms of my book, *The Nonviolent Coming of God,* it became the final chapter of the book. It was the story brought up to date of the new kind of humanity embodied by Jesus, who identified himself as "the human being."

I saw a nonviolent vision of people across borders, whether they're Jewish or Palestinian, that was envisioned actually by some of the people in Israel who saw a binational state, instead of this terrible division and war. We didn't have to go down the track that we did go down, which resulted in the partition of that area. That was not necessary — and is profoundly wrong.

So as a result of going repeatedly to the different countries there, I would say that a critical issue that is ignored in its larger dimension is nuclear disarmament for ALL of the countries of the Middle East. And when I say all, I mean ALL.

If one can engage in a disarmament treaty in the Middle East that will include Israel and Iran and Iraq and Syria and everybody else in that area — reflecting the commitment of the entire world, as already represented by the Non-Proliferation Treaty — then we're going to have peace across the boards.

Of course, the ignored party in all of this is Israel, which has been the nuclear power in the Middle East for decades.

Spirit: *So the U.S. keeps threatening Iran and other countries in the Middle East, but doesn't say anything about nuclear disarmament to its ally Israel?*

Douglass: It's total hypocrisy for the United States, the most powerful nuclear country in the world, to threaten and impose huge sanctions on Iran when we're not obeying the Non-Proliferation Treaty. That treaty was written as a trade-off between countries that do not have nuclear weapons not to develop them and countries that do have nuclear weapons to disarm.

Spirit: *Yet the U.S. is not disarming itself and it's not asking Israel to disarm.*

Douglass: Oh, absolutely not. Israel's disarmament is key to that of Iran's and our disarmament is key to that of everyone. And that's a treaty! We're not obeying the law, in other words. We have signed a treaty saying we would do that so long as other countries didn't develop nuclear weapons. Any student of current American history needs to know the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the terms of it — which oblige us to do what we say.

So that's the main issue. I would encourage people to understand this and to see this from the eyes of the Iraqis or the Jordanians or the Palestinians or, for that matter, the people who raise questions in Israel and who are loyal citizens of that country.

We've got to disarm the whole works, in terms of nuclear weapons, and then progressively through the whole range of weapons. And we can't do it in just one country. It has to be everybody. That's obvious to everybody except us.

Spirit: *Did you take part in nonviolent actions against the U.S. wars on Iraq?*

Douglass: Yeah, I was arrested for resisting both the Persian Gulf War in 1990 and the more recent incursion on Iraq in 2003. I was also arrested in Israel and Palestine for walking for peace repeatedly through those areas in the early 1990s. I took part in several peace walks through Israel and Palestine and into Jordan.

In all of those areas, we walked for weeks. Kathy Kelly was one of our leaders. You have interviewed Kathy for *Street Spirit* and I was following Kathy's lead. [See "Seeking Peace in a World of Imprisoned Beauty," *Street Spirit* Interview with Kathy Kelly, May 2014.]

Spirit: *Was that as part of Voices in the Wilderness?*

Douglass: No, the first time I was over there walking with Kathy, Voices hadn't been created yet. But on a later trip, I was one of the co-founders with her of Voices in the Wilderness. Shelley and I both went on trips with Kathy as part of Voices in the Wilderness. We made five trips to Iraq at different times, and I was arrested repeatedly in Palestine.

Spirit: *What were those arrests like? Civil disobedience must be a very different proposition in that war-torn area.*

Douglass: One of our nonviolent actions in Israel and Palestine was called Walk for a Peaceful Future. We walked up through northern Israel and then across into Palestine and then down through Jericho, and then across the bridge into Jordan. All the way along the walk, we were being arrested by the IDF, the Israeli Defense Forces, and then taken back to Jerusalem, always with the warning: "We're going to let you out here. Stop doing this!"

Then we'd go back to the site where we were arrested and continue our walk. Finally, we were able to walk across the bridge into Jordan, but we had been arrested many times by then.

We were going to go all the way to Iraq by taking vehicles into Iraq. This was within a couple months after the Persian Gulf War. When we got to Amman, the capital of Jordan, we waited to be given visas by the Iraqi government, and they weren't coming through. So I decided to go back to Israel and I took a bus with a group of Palestinian refugees who were trying to get in to see their families on the West Bank — and I was barred from Israel! [laughing]

It was very interesting because when I came to the gate, an official was examining the documents and passports of people who wanted to go in there — including a number of Palestinians who were barred.

When he came to me, he said, "Oh, Mr. Douglass." I realized he had been my jailer in Jericho — the same man! He said, "Well, I will call Jersualem, but I don't think you're going to be allowed to go back in." He did call, and I was barred. [laughing]

But we were then given permission to go to Iraq by the Iraqi government, and I was able for the first time to visit Baghdad with Kathy and the group.

Spirit: *Were you also delivering medical supplies to the victims of war?*

"We chose to be in the sights of the weapons of our own troops. For a few days, we were just as vulnerable as the Iraqi people. Explosions were occurring all over the city from missile attacks by our fleet in the Gulf."

Douglass: We had a big vehicle filled with medical supplies in the initial challenge to the sanctions. It was the spring of the year after the Persian Gulf War had ended, but sanctions were still in effect.

A year later, we were arrested on a second trip in northern Israel and Galilee, and I was in jail in Galilee for several days on that walk. I didn't think I would get into the country because I had already been barred.

We had an international group from about 15 countries on that second walk, and we had come together to support a vision of peace between all the people in that area, a Walk for a Peaceful Future. It included Israelis and Palestinians who were taking part in that. It was illegal to walk across the green line without permission of the Israeli government.

Of course, we weren't asking anyone's permission and they weren't giving it. We were arrested as we took part in that walk. The key point of the arrests in that incident, because we had a much bigger group and represented many countries, was when we crossed the green line, we weren't just a dozen or so, but a much larger number.

Spirit: *When you crossed the green line, what country were you arrested in? And where were you were jailed?*

Douglass. In Galilee. And then we went to jail in a Galilean prison.

Spirit: *That's heavy symbolism! How long were you in jail there?*

Douglass: About three days before we were released and kicked out of the country. But we had enough time before we were forced to leave to hold a demonstration in support of Moredchai Vinunu at his prison site. So it was a good group, and we did a lot of things before we were forced out of the country.

[*Editor:* Vinunu was imprisoned for 18 years for revealing details of Israel's nuclear weapons program because of his opposition to weapons of extermination. Daniel Ellsberg called him "the preeminent hero of the nuclear era."]

Spirit: *When the U.S. declared war on Iraq, did you protest the U.S. invasion?*

Douglass: When the invasion of Iraq began, I went with a Christian Peacemakers Team to Baghdad. CPT and Voices in the Wilderness joined a larger group called the Iraq Peace Team. Our CPT group went in during the first week of the war, from Amman across the desert to Baghdad. We were between the U.S. Army and the Iraq Army.

Spirit: *What was it like to be in Iraq when the war broke out?*

Douglass: We were almost killed. The U.S. forces were on a hill at one point. Our cars slowed down and stopped because a car just ahead of us had been hit by gunfire. The car was burning. We were being driven by an Iraqi driver and in a car that had Iraqi license plates. And there were U.S. armored personnel carriers on a hill and they had their weapons pointed at us. And the Iraqi people who were in that other vehicle started coming toward our vehicle as our vehicle was slowing, and our driver realized he had to speed up; otherwise we were going to be caught in the fire from the hill. It was very close to the fire on the hill killing everybody. The situation was very close.

Spirit: *Why were people in your group willing to take such heavy risks to be there when the war began in Baghdad?*

Douglass: Solidarity. We chose to be in the sights of the weapons of our own troops. For a few days, we were just as vulnerable as the Iraqi people, and that remained the case for the following week when we were in Baghdad. Explosions were occurring all over the city from missile attacks by our fleet in the Gulf. U.S. ships in the Gulf were firing cruise missiles that were exploding all over Baghdad, and U.S. planes were coming in and bombing left and right, with no Iraqi Air Force to counter them.

So we knew what it was like for a defenseless population, and I mean *defenseless*. The Iraqi Army was a laugh. There were a few artillery pieces at different streets around the city, but it was nothing! Basically it was a defenseless population with a very strident commander in chief named Saddam Hussein who was boasting about his almost nonexistent armed forces, a pretense that was then echoed by the U.S. officials magnifying his threat.

Spirit: *Because U.S. officials had to pretend Iraq was a serious adversary.*

Douglass: Yes, the consequence was that a defenseless people was in the midst of this terrible attack by U.S. forces. And we saw it all. We could come back and talk about that, but it was at a time of uproarious militarism and it was very hard to get through. But it changed our lives in many ways, and that experience stays with me.

Spirit: *Along with speaking out about what you witnessed in Iraq when you came back to the U.S., did you do any civil disobedience to protest the war?*

Douglass: I was arrested with many others for vigiling in front of the White House in protest of the invasion of Iraq in 2003. You're supposed to keep moving at all times, so we would stop to pray and we were arrested. I wrote to the judge saying I would not be coming to my trial.

Spirit: *Why did you refuse to go back to D.C. when you were put on trial?*

Douglass: Because I did not want to cooperate any further with the process of arresting people for praying in front of the White House. [laughing] It's no reason to arrest a person in the first place, much less put them on trial.

Spirit: *Did they ever come after you for your noncooperation?*

Douglass: I was arrested years later in Birmingham for not going to the trial in Washington, D.C. A federal marshal came to my home in Birmingham and arrested me. The judge was planning to sentence me to six months in prison, and he didn't even understand civil disobedience.

Lynn McKenzie, a Catholic sister who happens to be a lawyer, took it upon herself to go to that judge and tell him what civil disobedience was all about. So they gave me one day instead of six months! I only served a weekend in the local jail for that.

Spirit: *She wasn't even acting as your lawyer? She just went to talk to the judge on her own?*

Douglass: No! She wasn't acting as my lawyer. She just contacted him, and then she did come into the courtroom. But she had already tried to explain to this man who didn't have a clue as to what was going on. He thought I was just a fugitive from justice. It was only because of that kind Benedictine sister who was a lawyer, that I didn't serve much time.

Spirit: *Well, the lesson for our readers is clear: If you ever get in trouble with the Law, call the Benedictine sisters.*

Douglass: There you go! [laughing]

The Benedictine sisters are known for many things. That was really just one act of nonviolence, compassion and understanding from a highly skilled sister.

City Council Delays Vote on Homeless Laws

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"ambassadors" assaulting two homeless men on March 19 when they thought no one was watching.

The overlap between all these issues was not lost on the public, which swelled each hearing with mutual supporters. But Mayor Bates finally agreed to send the anti-homeless proposals back to the agenda committee meeting in late August with Maio's amendments, after initially resisting Worthington's motion to reschedule. No doubt, the mayor finally recognized that attempting to continue the marathon meeting ran the risk of obligating not just the council but the city employees helping run it to watch the sunrise together.

Four people were there in support of the anti-homeless laws: two from the Downtown Berkeley Association which wrote the original proposals, one from the Telegraph Merchants Association, and Chamber of Commerce President Polly Armstrong. They looked pretty small compared to the hundreds who had rallied against the anti-homeless proposals on the steps of old City Hall with speeches, prayers and song. But those four are enough. They clearly have the votes to pass the proposal, since the Berkeley City Council majority seems unmoved by moral, legal and even practical arguments. The next steps for a community dedicated to protecting human rights are unclear.

Berkeley's New Anti-Poor Laws

Berkeley City Manager Christine Daniel re-tooled the original anti-homeless proposals and dialed back some of the DBA's more extreme suggestions. She even pointed out that they are currently enforcing laws against behavior which is perfectly legal, but obediently developed some new recommendations on behalf of merchant groups *hostile to sharing public space with poor*, homeless and transient people.

The recommendations are:

1. Adopt first reading of an Ordinance amending Berkeley Municipal Code Section 13.37.020 to add a provision that it is unlawful for any person to solicit another who is making a payment at a parking meter.

2. Adopt first reading of an Ordinance adding Section 13.36.040 to the Berkeley Municipal Code Regulating Lying in City-Owned Planters.

3. Adopt first reading of an Ordinance amending Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 14.48 to ensure that public streets, and especially sidewalks, are fully accessible and usable for the purposes for which they were constructed and are intended, specifically the movement of pedestrian and vehicular traffic and goods.

4. Adopt first reading of an Ordinance adding Section 13.36.085 to the Berkeley Municipal Code prohibiting urination and defecation in public places.

The first provision expands the current prohibition on panhandling within ten feet of an ATM to include a prohibition on soliciting anyone in the act of making a payment at a parking meter.

The second provision expands the prohibition on lying on the sidewalk to include lying on the walls and interior of downtown planters unless there is a medical emergency.

The third provision has detailed provisions prohibiting anyone from putting anything on the sidewalk which exceeds two square feet for more than one hour unless the person gets a permit from the traffic engineer, a measure clearly aimed at the people who traditionally share their artwork, crafts, or political materials and collect donations along the streets.

The fourth provision makes it a crime to urinate or defecate in a public place (this is already prohibited under California law) or any place "exposed to public view." This is more inclusive language and would cover private property near a public area such as an alley or doorway *without creating any additional access to bathrooms*. In fact, the DBA is on record recommending *against* adding a public bathroom to the BART Plaza redesign on the grounds that it would constitute "an attractive nuisance."

What It All Really Means

The City Manager's assumption in the third and possibly most problematic provision is that the First Amendment rights of artists, signature collectors at tables, people with political displays, etc., have to be "balanced" with concerns about "economic vitality" which is presumed to be negatively affected by the presence of First Amendment activity.

The words "vital" or "vitality" appear eight times in the document. The words "aesthetic" or "aesthetically" appear six times, with additional phrases which work overtime to avoid stating overtly the crisis of having some scruffy guy or annoying signature collector spoiling "an aesthetically pleasing streetscape."

It's worth noting that the ordinance Daniel is attempting to re-word was born in the 1950s as an effort to curb problematic merchant behavior on behalf of pedestrians, who were tired of trying to navigate through streets cluttered with chairs, tables, signs, and displays of goods blocking the public right of way.

It was dusted off in the early 1990s by Chief of Police Dash Butler for use only against poor and homeless people until civil rights advocates brought the pattern and practice of its discriminatory application to the attention of — of all people — Councilmember Linda Maio, who had the clarity of mind in those days to call for a halt to the obvious discrimination.

But times have changed. The city now creates special permits for the permanent acquisition of public space by merchants adjacent to sidewalks. And the struggling kid with the hand-painted patches hoping to raise enough through donations to make it through the week can just go fish.

Lies, Damn Lies, and Surveys

A survey conducted last year "on behalf of the Downtown Berkeley Association" which gave people an option to indicate they would like to "reduce homelessness" was cited by the City Manager as foundation for the necessity of more anti-homeless laws.

This is a crucial point. The well-intended people who took this survey, including myself, did not clamor for ineffective and expensive anti-homeless laws which reduce the footprint of one's possessions to two square feet. They just couldn't help but prioritize people who are struggling to stay alive while sleeping on the streets, an absurdity in a town with one of the largest income disparities in the nation.

I took that survey, and I want to "reduce homelessness," which seems like something any reasonable person would say. The survey had a couple questions which conflated homelessness with "problematic street behavior," an intentionally ambiguous phrase used as code in the DBA and city planning circles to mean the people we don't like and all the things they do.

The study seemed designed to force anyone with a concern about homelessness, which is simply a concern about the low-income housing crisis, to run the risk of having their concern abused as support for repressive new efforts to dog the vulnerable people who are struggling on the streets, the mentally ill in a moment of crisis, the troubles of transient travelers with canine companions, and so forth.

Survey takers probably wondered what I wondered: would people's natural concern about people in need be distorted to support more repressive anti-poor ordinances? The answer is yes, yes, yes. If you wave your hand in Berkeley and say, "people shouldn't have to sleep on the streets" the City Manager and a majority of the City Council has decided you mean that they should all be in jail.

They should be ticketed to death over a bevy of infractions and misdemeanors which essentially mean the courts have to sort out who is crazy, who is cogent but already behind the judicial eight ball and has to spend some time in jail — the modern equivalent of the poorhouse — working off their debt to society.

Anti-homeless laws make the eight ball bigger. None of the survey takers were asked, "Would you like to make life even harder for homeless people?" or "Would you like to drum homeless and poor people out of town?" or "Would you like to jail the mentally ill?" If these questions had been asked, the DBA would have gotten more clarity about the concern they and apparently a willing City Manager are attempting to distort.

The real survey was the 2012 election, in which an anti-sitting law was resoundingly defeated by Berkeley voters despite being draped in extra funding and services for the poor. Berkeley knows its civil rights like it knows its farmers market tomatoes, which is why the crafty abuse of an ambiguous survey deserves a resounding objection.

Bob Offer-Westort, one of the volunteers for the Streets Are For Everyone (SAFE) campaign, said, "The process for this bill has been tragicomic from the beginning. The City of Berkeley has commissions specifically to ensure that members of the council — who can't be experts on everything they legislate — are informed by broader expertise. At no point has council sought input from its commissions or from any of the city's homeless service providers. Not a single person who could be considered to have any expertise on homelessness has been consulted.

"Every organization in Berkeley that knows anything at all about homelessness has opposed these proposals, but council has not sought their feedback. The relevant commissions have opposed the legislation, but council has not made space for their feedback. And now, less than ten hours before the City Council meeting, we're seeing that there are going to be massive changes, but we don't fully know what they're going to be. This undermines the purpose of a public legislative process."

Osha Neumann, an attorney with the East Bay Community Law Center, noted that specific changes mentioned by Maio would create free speech protections after 10 p.m. and implies charges would be dismissed if those cited were to enter counseling and housing services "in good faith."

"This isn't meaningful," said Neumann, who provides legal defense on infraction citations. "Who's to determine whether people are in good faith? Do they take a lie detector test? Administered by the police? If there is no housing available, how long do they have to wait to prove good faith?

"And what's the mechanism for implementation? Do the police keep a database so they know when to dismiss a ticket? The proposed laws need to go back to the drawing board. Trying to correct mistakes on the fly just leads to more mistakes."

The worst aspect of the proposed ordinances is #3, the part which in the clipped agenda language sounds as though it simply makes sure the streets are passable, but in the real text of the ordinance is pages and pages of instructions about the literal square footage of personal belongings (two feet) and the literal distance they need to be from a planter, a bench, a curb, a wall, a street tree, a tree well, all of which may be different; five feet from this, three feet from that, a numbing stream of requirements no reasonable person could possibly keep straight.

Neumann's observations about the ordinance's restrictions on personal belongings and free speech indicate matters which need to be studied by Berkeley's citizen commissions.

"These new laws are actually worse than I anticipated, particularly the one about obstructing the sidewalk," he said. "You won't be able to have any possessions larger than two feet square any time of the day or night. We should ask the councilmembers how big their beds are.

"I'm also amazed by the restrictions on free-speech-related activity. It won't be legal to sit on a milk crate while selling *Street Spirit* without first getting a permit five days in advance. And most places in our commercial corridors you won't be able to sit at all. That's pretty outrageous."

What Can We Do?

The Berkeley City Council is not entirely impervious to reason, which Mayor Bates proved by finally calling a halt to the idea of a middle-of-the-night hearing as June 30 became July 1. For starters, we need to insist that the lengthy alterations to the original proposal get a chance to be evaluated by all the relevant city commissions, including the Peace and Justice Commission, the Commission on Homelessness, the Human Welfare and Community Action Commission, the Youth Commission, the Community Health Commission, and the Police Review Commission.

This is more meaningful than it might seem. When our city leaders consider, even for a minute, prioritizing the aesthetic perceptions of a handful of wealthy property owners and developers over the very real needs of the poorest, most vulnerable people in town, it is because they are not hearing enough from their citizenry. They hear from us directly from time to time, but the record of what they hear from our representative commissions has, or should have, legal and moral gravity.

Our commission system was designed to make room for citizen concerns, to absorb special expertise on singular issues, to design opportunities to sort out and perhaps toss out an idea that might have seemed sensible at 1:00 a.m. but looks pretty stupid in the light of day.

Before we tinker with our own human rights, we should make sure Maio's bizarre proposals are well vetted in the sober light of a commission or two. Because it isn't just poor and homeless people who have a broad target painted on their backs by this Berkeley City Council. We may have elected them, but none of us are in any part of this City Council's vision of the future.

Removal of Bus Shelter

from page 5

Next I was transferred to Bruce Qualls, VP of real estate and government affairs for Clear Channel Outdoor who was busy on another line, according to the receptionist. Qualls did not reply to my request for an interview or my request to ask what happened to the bus shelter and bench in front of the Lucky supermarket, or when it would be replaced.

The elderly and disabled people of East Oakland are being abused by tactics of collective punishment when agencies or government partners use their authority to target a whole community in an effort to attack homeless people, or a few drug dealers operating in an area.

Mental Health: Investing in Compassion and Empathy

by Bhaani Singh and Kenneth Hahn

Berkeley is a city that boasts the reputation of free speech, liberal thought, and environmentally conscious behavior; a land that prides itself on diversity and social progress; a place that many of us find simultaneously chaotic and serene. Like the tie-dye shirts seen on Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley's rich culture is a swirl of various ethnicities, academic backgrounds, and political thought.

The homeless population, too, is weaved into the fabric of our history. Yet, despite its familiar presence, we are left with many dangling threads of housing and mental health, which must carefully be sewn back into this fabric to ensure community strength and solidarity.

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), more than 610,000 people experience homelessness every night, including about 140,000 children. These numbers are far lower than the actual figure — closer to 3 million people in many estimates — because HUD only counts once a year and the number of homeless persons changes as people move in and out of being homeless.

It is often observed that about one in five of these individuals suffer from severe mental health issues, and have been diagnosed with schizophrenia, substance use disorder, bipolar disorder, and depression. These mental disorders may affect an individual's ability to carry out essential activities for survival and maintain stable relationships with family or friends.

The social selection hypothesis states that as a result of schizophrenia impairing earning power and income, schizophrenic persons are often forced to move into poorer neighborhoods. On the other hand, the social causation hypothesis states that people with low socioeconomic status develop mental disorders as a result of the stresses and adversities they face.

Thus, mental disorders and poverty are often thought to be of a cyclical nature. Furthermore, unmet mental health needs affect one's physical health. Compared to the general population, homeless people have poorer health outcomes, including higher rates of tuberculosis, asthma, diabetes, and HIV. Nearly half of mentally ill individuals also suffer from substance use disorders, as a way to self-medicate or to cope with the stresses they face.

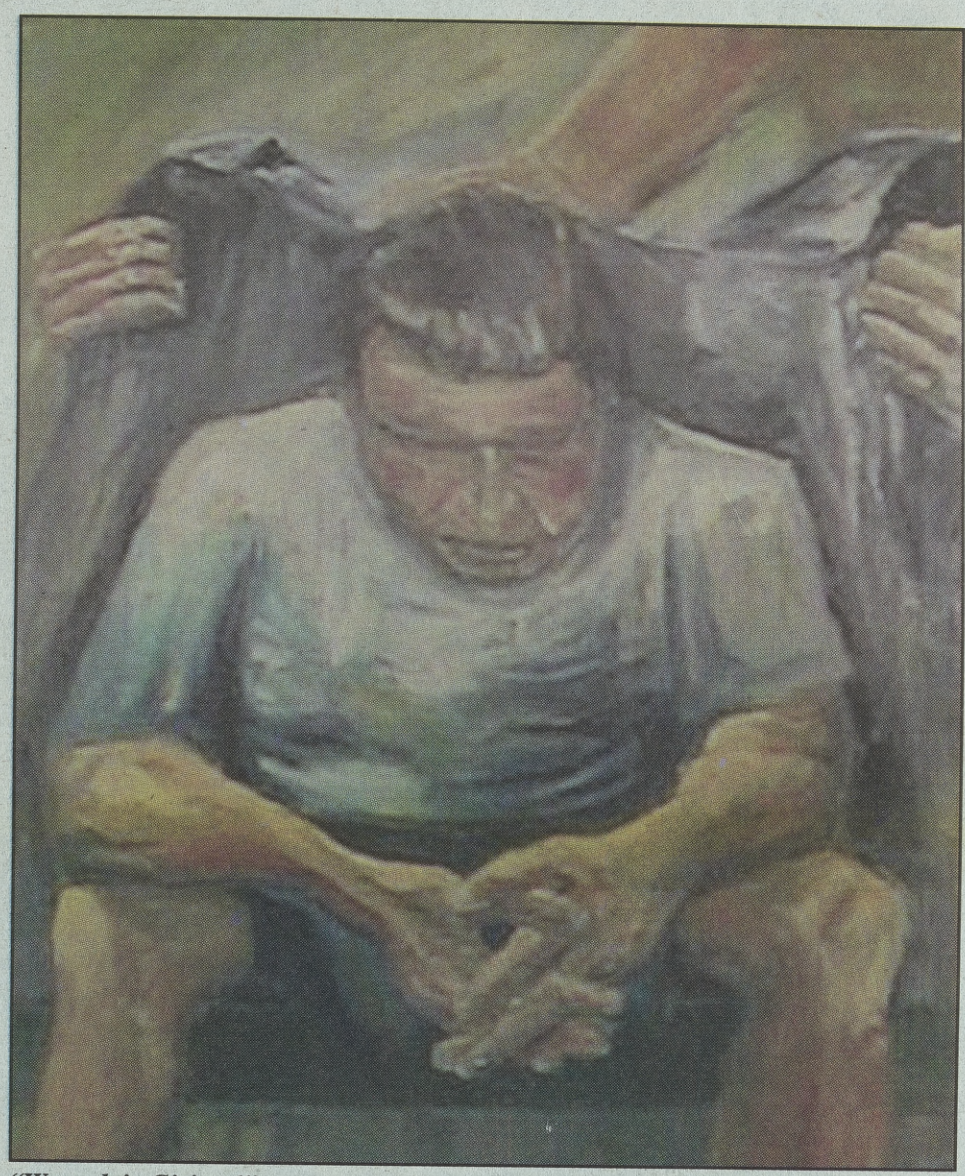
As a result of poor mental and physical health, as well as social stigma and inadequate income, these individuals face barriers to housing, employment, and a healthy livelihood.

Many of the mental health issues faced by the homeless population can be treated with therapy or counseling. Medication has been effective for some individuals, but many have reported adverse and severely incapacitating reactions to antipsychotic medications.

However, when these conditions are neglected, they end up not only costing our healthcare system millions of dollars in hospitalization, but also prolonging human suffering. In Alameda County, nearly one in five adults reported that they needed professional help for emotional health or alcohol use in 2007.

Unfortunately, a systemic discrimination against the mentally disabled is prevalent in our political and economic systems, where funding is allocated towards direct physical ailments but mental health problems are neglected and given a lower funding priority.

Medicare and Medicaid have far more stringent restrictions on mental health care provision than physical health care.



"Warmth in Giving 1" Art by Elizabeth King

Instead of increased citations and arrests, Berkeley officials should invest in affordable supportive housing and increase the number of outreach workers who can help homeless persons find physical and mental stability off the streets.

Mental health facilities are underfunded and slowly emptying, while emergency rooms and prisons are overcrowded.

In 2006, the Justice Department reported that nationally about 1 million people in custody suffered from a mental health problem. If funding is appropriately designated to mental health resources, the saved costs can not only help people avoid hospitalization and prison, but also can be spent towards other important areas of our society, such as education.

As a society, we are willing to look for cures for cancer or diabetes, but we find it challenging to focus on risk factors that contribute to mental disorders. It is time to give equal importance to preventative care, mental health resources and medical treatments.

One step towards alleviating mental disorders, especially in the homeless population, is to acknowledge that the issue exists. Many people who suffer from a mental disorder wish to be treated; they just don't have the resources to receive the necessary care towards a healthier lifestyle. Homeless individuals often come from backgrounds of social disadvantage and economic instability, which can trigger or exacerbate the development of mental health problems over time.

Over the past few years, we have had the privilege of working with the Suitcase Clinic, a group of dedicated students and professionals who attempt to slowly bridge the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged populations in Berkeley through free social and health services to the underserved.

Through our conversations with many clients, we have come to realize that most people do not just want the services we have. Rather, they want to be acknowledged as people and to be treated with respect and dignity, something which they do not experience very often.

When society ignores people over and over again, for days and years at a time, people are forced to wonder why they are being ignored. They are provoked into questioning their existence. As a result, it is important to acknowledge that issues in our community exist and by doing so, we can begin to foster dialogue and target interventions to help individuals break away from the cycle of mental disorder, hospitals, streets, and poverty.

Another important step is to create permanent supportive housing. Permanent supportive housing is a mixture of affordable housing and a package of supportive services to help people attain education and employment opportunities, housing stability, and improved health and social outcomes.

These housing programs often work with community workers to reach out to mentally ill homeless persons and help them find support groups, learn daily living skills, and access treatment.

Many research studies, including those from the National Mental Health Association, reveal that in addition to helping most people break free from homelessness, this housing approach lowers public costs for prison stays and hospital treatment, and is effective for people with mental health issues.

Even in 2015, many current proposals in Berkeley, such as preventing bedding on sidewalks and sitting near tree wells, are seemingly targeted against the homeless population. Spending money towards initiatives like these will not solve homelessness. It targets a very important group in our society and attempts to remove them from view, an experience that can easily be construed as dehumanizing.

STORIES FROM THE SUITCASE CLINIC

At the Suitcase Clinic, we have come to realize that people want to be treated with respect and dignity — something which they do not experience very often.

Rather than increased citations and arrests, city officials should invest in affordable supportive housing and increase the number of outreach workers who can help homeless persons find physical and mental stability off the streets.

The government should consider increasing funding towards these supportive programs and mental health services so that even when economic times change, services will be still be stable and provide help for homeless individuals, particularly those with mental health problems — a group that composed an estimated 40 percent of the homeless population in Berkeley in 2009.

The homeless population is part of our community. They are part of the Berkeley we all love and are proud of. It is time to stop labeling homelessness and mental disorders as controlled or personal choices, and to socially integrate individuals suffering from these situations into society.

For a peaceful world and a stronger Berkeley, we must invest ourselves in compassion and empathy. The dangling threads of our community need to be sewn, for we cannot ignore those whose humanity is intertwined with our own.

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THE SUITCASE CLINIC

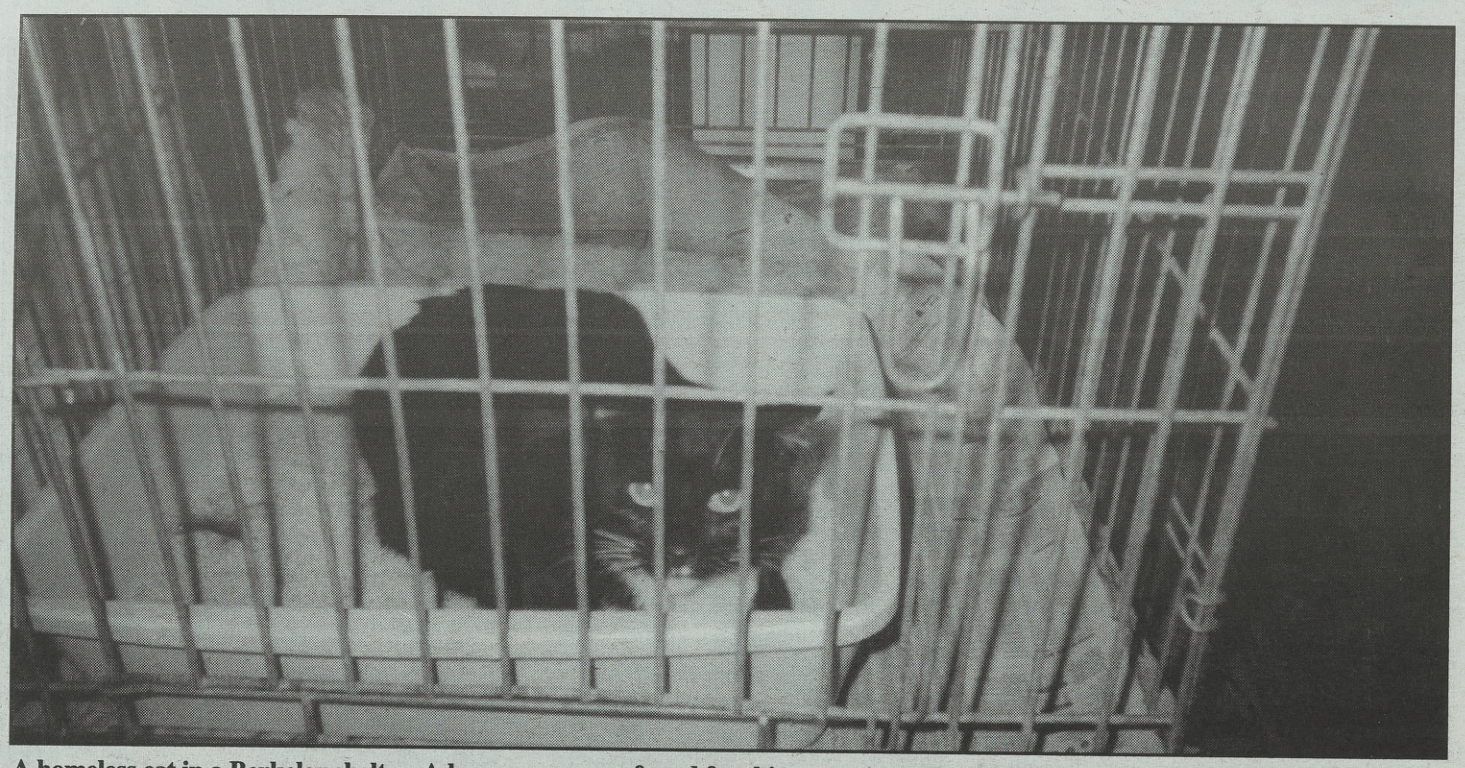
The Suitcase Clinic is a humanitarian student-run organization and volunteer community group offering free health and social services to underserved populations since 1989. We operate three multi-service drop-in centers in Berkeley, and are open on Monday and Tuesday nights to anyone in need, regardless of income, residence, gender, ethnicity, age, etc. For more information, please visit our website at www.suitcaseclinic.org.

We do not offer professional mental health services, but are able to lend a listening ear and direct referrals to appropriate professionals in the community. If you, a loved one, or community member is in crisis, please call the 24-hour, 7-day-per-week Crisis Support Hotline for phone-based counseling and referrals. Their telephone numbers are 1-800-309-2131 (Alameda County Hotline) and 1-800-273-TALK (Nationwide Hotline).

For residents of Berkeley and Albany, the Berkeley Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team delivers crisis intervention services, consultation on mental health issues, and disaster and trauma-related mental health services. Their telephone number is 510-981-5254. More information can be found at the Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services website, www.acbhcs.org.

No Pets Allowed: Death Sentence for the Pets of Tenants

Ending "No Pets Allowed" policies would greatly reduce the number of pets killed in shelters or abandoned on the street.



A homeless cat in a Berkeley shelter. A home was never found for this cat — just one of the many lives lost. Joan Clair photo

by Joan Clair

In the Bay Area, thousands of people face eviction, homelessness and economic hardships because landlords have raised their rents beyond all reason. We are often told that all this injustice is simply due to the inexorable workings of the marketplace.

Since the market economy is a faceless abstraction, it offers a convenient way to draw our attention away from the real-life landlords and real estate owners who have caused this economic misery through their greed and reckless profiteering.

The so-called market economy has caused countless cases of eviction-for-profit and displaced thousands of renters in the Bay Area. This system exalts profits at the expense of life, and might better be called the "Heartless Market Place." Along with causing homelessness for thousands of human beings, this heartless system has also caused untold suffering for the animal companions of tenants.

The heartless market place is an area where no pets are allowed. Many tenants are unable to find an affordable place to live where pets are also allowed, and are thus coerced to surrender their pets to a "shelter" which puts the animal to sleep in a few days if no home can be found.

Just as homeless pets face death by being euthanized in animal shelters, many homeless people die on the streets through lack of shelter and housing. Our society has an uneasy conscience about the deaths of homeless people on the streets and countless homeless animals in shelters.

Two groups are discriminated against in rental housing: nonhuman animals and low-income people. Animals are not protected by anti-discrimination laws regarding housing. In other words, "no pets allowed" is legal. Similarly, landlords are not required to consider Section 8 housing applicants for their housing units.

"No Kill" Animal Shelters

Great strides have been made in the "no kill" animal shelter movement which began about 30 years ago. However, millions of unwanted animals are still euthanized in shelters yearly, and even "no kill" shelters turn away animals that are not considered adoptable.

There are many reasons why animals end up in shelters: economic difficulties, job loss, divorce and break-ups, death in the family, and foreclosure. However, underlying all these hardships, another problem often results in the death of companion animals — namely, the inability, when a crisis hits, to find housing where pets are allowed. "No Pets Allowed" is a typical restriction in the heartless market place.

With skyrocketing rents and stagnation in workers' wages, it becomes more difficult to find any affordable housing at all.

However, even with these inequitable conditions, a new way of looking at the nonhuman creatures who share our lives has emerged and is gaining strength.

More and more people regard the nonhuman animals who share their lives with us as family members, rather than as members of a different and less worthy species. As a result, when for any of the reasons listed previously a person must find new housing and cannot because of "No Pets Allowed" stipulations, it is the loss of a family member that is at stake.

The Loss of a Family Member

The loss can mean a death sentence for the nonhuman family member who is turned over to a shelter when a new home cannot be found. Under similar circumstances, would we turn over a human child to a shelter which permits euthanasia if we could not find a residence which allows children? Fortunately, human children are now covered by anti-discrimination laws regarding housing. However, at one time, they were discriminated against as well.

Now the laws must be changed so that nonhuman animal companions, such as dogs and cats, are included in the category of family members who, along with other family members such as human children, cannot be denied housing.

There are safeguards landlords have in regard to any new residents, including a right to check references, including those from prior landlords. Young children and young animals can pose risks, but not ones that cannot be corrected.

The anti-discrimination laws in housing make it mandatory to accept service animals. Animals that are not designated as service animals may be as well-behaved. Finding responsible renters is what's important. And, obviously, there are already legal restrictions in place regarding the keeping of wild or dangerous animals in rental units.

Eliminating the "No Pets Allowed" practices of landlords would greatly reduce the number of pets that are killed in shelters or put out on the street. It is a measure that would take the "no kill" animal shelter movement to a new level of success in saving lives.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals has said we must "abandon the archaic and unjust boundary of 'human' that we use to justify inflicting pain, suffering and death on billions of beings."

In my own life, I have experienced discrimination towards nonhuman family members with my dog, Wind-of-Fire, my cat, Moon, and my dog, Clair. When I came to attend a Berkeley seminary in 1980 with my dog, Wind-of-Fire, I was promised housing for both of us. Within a week of arrival, I was told I had to get rid of Wind-of-Fire or move off campus. I did neither, and we won out in the end, but my consciousness was changed.

We also had to fight the school administration's plan to establish a "No Pets Allowed" policy, and we won that battle also. However, these threats to my family member made me realize how vulnerable nonhuman animals are in our society, even in liberal institutions.

My next animal companion, Moon, was a cat whose human companion had left him with her roommates when she went to a graduate school with a "No Pets Allowed" policy. None of the roommates related very deeply to Moon. As a result, he was left outside at night and injured. He was a very angry cat when he finally came to me. Had I not taken him, he would have been brought to the pound and more than likely put to sleep because of his justifiable anger.

A Dog Dumped Out of a Car

Next, I found my dog, Clair, on the street in the business district of Berkeley after she'd been dumped out of a car. There was a "No Pets Allowed" policy in the mobile home park where I lived at the time. I dearly loved Clair, and she needed my support, so I had to move with her and my trailer to another park in order to keep her. [See "The Bonds of Love: Cast Off on the Street," *Street Spirit,* November 2012].

As we have reported in *Street Spirit,* in spite of their disadvantages, many homeless people have refused to go into a shelter which does not permit nonhuman family members. They'd rather remain on the street than give up their dog or cat.

The "No Pets Allowed" policies of landlords are a civil rights issue. Such discriminatory practices should be revoked. We are unaccustomed to seeing that pets may have rights, and this may seem like an extreme position to some. However, once the "archaic and unjust boundary of 'human'" as described by PETA, is understood, with all its destructive consequences, a new respect and appreciation for nonhuman animals emerges.

Ending Discrimination

Giving pets legal status as family members in anti-discrimination housing laws is a logical next step in the battle to provide protection for groups that have suffered housing discrimination based on gender, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, disabilities and families with children.

It would be a wholesome step in building a more just society. When joined with other steps to alleviate human homelessness, it could lead to more humane living spaces for all of us. We must build more affordable housing, fight for a living wage, advocate for more decent levels of disability and welfare benefits, and eliminate the economic inequities which are dragging our society down at present.

And while we continue this struggle for economic justice, let us remember to defend and protect the lives of the animals who give us so much love, and offer such irreplaceable companionship. For many of us, they have become members of our families. They cannot be abandoned in shelters where they may be killed.

Berkeley Council Member Proposes the Abolition of "No Pet" Policies

by Joan Clair

In October of 2014, Jesse Arreguin submitted a proposal to the Berkeley City Council to consider disallowing "No Pets" policies as a condition of tenancy. Unfortunately, there were not enough votes to support his position. The recommendation was tabled.

However, this was a remarkable first step to end discrimination against nonhuman family members in housing. To our knowledge, it was the first such attempt in the nation. We hope this will lead to similar proposals and eventual legislation.

Arreguin presented many practical reasons for initiating such a recommendation. These included more cost-effective options for animal care services, better treatment of animals and a greater number of adoptions as a result of the availability of more housing, thereby saving the lives of more animals.

Arreguin also showed how landlords would still have legal protections. The animal advocacy groups he contacted were supportive of this measure. The following excerpt from Arreguin's proposal is a clear statement of humane values.

"Allowing pet owners to keep their animals when they seek housing will also help cut down on the number of animals abandoned in Berkeley.... If fewer animals are abandoned because their owners are able to keep them no matter where they live in Berkeley, there would be fewer animals needing the shelter and care that BACS provides daily. Conversely, allowing tenants to have pets may increase the adoption of animals from BACS with resulting animal registration fee revenue. This would save the lives of animals who might have been abandoned and hurt or killed, and allow BACS to save more lives by giving them more room in the shelter and save more money to continue to provide top-notch care to the animals who come to BACS in need."

For more information, contact Jesse Arreguin at (510) 981-7140; E-mail: jarreguin@cityofberkeley.info; Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Building, 2180 Milvia Street, 5th Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704. The proposal can be found at http://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2014/10_Oct/Documents/2014-10-21_Item_24_%E2%80%9CNo_Pet%E2%80%9D_Policies.aspx .